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The French Factor in U.S. Foreign Policy during the Nixon-Pompidou Period, 1969–1974

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When Richard Nixon took office as president of the United States in early 1969, he and his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, wanted to put U.S. relations with France on an entirely new footing. Ties between the two countries in the 1960s, especially from early 1963 on, had been far from ideal, and U.S. officials at the time blamed French President Charles de Gaulle for the fact that the United States was on such poor terms with its old ally. But Nixon and Kissinger took a rather different view. They admired de Gaulle and even thought of themselves as Gaullists.¹ Like de Gaulle, they believed that the United States in the past had been too domineering. “The excessive concentration of decision-making in the hands of the senior partner,” as Kissinger put it in a book published in 1965, was not in America’s own interest; it drained the alliance of “long-term political vitality.”² The United States needed real allies—“self-confident partners with a strongly developed sense of identity”—and not satellites.³ Nixon took the same line in meetings both with de Gaulle in March 1969 and with his successor as president, Georges Pompidou, in February 1970. “To have just two superpowers,”

1. See, for example, Nixon-Pompidou Meeting, 31 May 1973, 10 A.M., p. 3, in Kissinger Transcripts Collection, Doc. KT00742, Digital National Security Archive, <http://nsarchive.chadwyck.com/home.do> (hereinafter referred to as DNSA/KT—, with appropriate document number). See also Kissinger Meeting with Rusk, Bundy, McCloy, et al., 28 November 1973, p. 8, in DNSA/KT00928; and Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), p. 919.

2. Henry Kissinger, *The Troubled Partnership: A Re-appraisal of the Atlantic Alliance* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965), p. 233.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 235. See also Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), pp. 86, 106. This had been Kissinger’s view for some time. See, especially, his important article “NATO’s Nuclear Dilemma,” *The Reporter*, 28 March 1963, pp. 22–37—an article described by President John F. Kennedy at the time as a “disaster.” See Richard Neustadt, Notes of a Conversation with Carl Kaysen, 1 June 1963, in Richard Neustadt Papers, Box 22, Folder “Memcons—US,” John F. Kennedy Library (JFKL), Boston.

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Nixon told Pompidou, was “not healthy.” “What we need,” he said, “is a better balance in the West.”⁴

When Kissinger and Nixon argued along these lines, they were thinking above all of France. And indeed if they were serious about recasting U.S. policy in this way, ending what Kissinger later called the “brutish quarrel” with the French was bound to be of fundamental importance.⁵ The relationship needed to be rebuilt, and they thought this goal was within reach. French foreign policy under Pompidou, in Kissinger’s view, was “serious and consistent.”⁶ The British, by contrast, were no longer interested in playing a major role: “With every passing year they acted less as if their decisions mattered. They offered advice, usually sage; they rarely sought to embody it in a policy of their own. British statesmen were content to act as honored consultants in our deliberations.”⁷ As for the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), both Nixon and Kissinger were worried about where the policy of the new Willy Brandt government—its *Ostpolitik*, or policy of improving relations with the East—might be leading. They knew they had to go along with that policy, at least for the time being.⁸ But they were worried about German nationalism and German neutralism, about the Germans’ supposed interest in eventually doing away with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and about the possibility that leaders like Brandt, although personally committed to the West, might be initiating a process they would not be able to control.⁹ This

4. Nixon–de Gaulle Meeting, 1 March 1969, p. 3, in Nixon Presidential Library Virtual Library (<http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/>); and Nixon–Pompidou Meeting, 24 February 1970, p. 6, in DNSA/KT00103. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 81–82, 86, 106, 390, 418; and Kissinger, *Troubled Partnership*, pp. 233–236.

5. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 5.

6. Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 420, 963.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 421.

8. As Kissinger said in a National Security Council (NSC) meeting in 1970: “We can’t afford to oppose Brandt but we can’t support his policy too strongly either.” See NSC Meeting Notes, 14 October 1970, in DNSA/KT00198. Kissinger took a dim view of the agreements that were eventually reached. The German settlement, he told the British in April 1973, was “pernicious.” The U.S. government, he noted several months later, had “hair-raising intelligence on what the Germans were saying to the Russians.” See Kissinger Meeting with British Officials, 19 April 1973, p. 4, in DNSA/KT00707; Cromer to Douglas-Home, 24 November 1973, in Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon, eds., *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, Series III, Vol. 4, (New York: Routledge, 2006), CD-ROM, Doc. 412 (henceforth referred to as DBPO III, with appropriate volume and document numbers). On this general issue, see Stephan Fuchs, *Dreiecksverhältnisse sind immer kompliziert: Kissinger, Bahr und die Ostpolitik* (Hamburg: Rotbuch Verlag, 1999); Holger Klitzing, *The Nemesis of Stability: Henry A. Kissinger’s Ambivalent Relationship with Germany* (Trier, Germany: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2007); and Holger Klitzing, “To Grin and Bear It: The Nixon Administration and *Ostpolitik*,” in Carole Fink and Bernd Schaefer, eds., *Ostpolitik, 1969–1974: European and Global Perspectives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 181–197.

9. See Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 408–409; and Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 146. See also Nixon’s comments in a meeting with Pompidou, 13 December 1971, in William Burr, ed., *The*

meant that the United States could not have the same sort of relationship with West Germany that Nixon and Kissinger hoped to have with France. Too much independence for West Germany would be dangerous; the FRG was viewed more as a problem than as a partner. Kissinger explained U.S. thinking in this area to Pompidou in May 1973. A strong Europe, in Washington's view, was as essential as a strong China. In this strong Europe, "France would play a pivotal role. We do not believe that [West] Germany is sufficiently strong psychologically, and we believe it is too open to Soviet pressures to be able to contribute to develop a Europe in this sense." What was "of great importance," Kissinger told Pompidou, is "that you understand our real policy"; "we have never discussed this so openly with another leader."¹⁰

So France was of central importance, and Nixon and Kissinger tried to develop a close relationship with the Pompidou government. They admired Pompidou as a person.¹¹ They liked the way the French tended to think in cool, realistic, power-politics terms.¹² They tended to view France as the most "European" of the European allies, saying things that the other European governments did not dare to say aloud. This meant that in dealing with France as something of a privileged partner Nixon and Kissinger were in a sense dealing with Western Europe as a whole.¹³ And they were willing, they said, to live with the fact that French and U.S. interests and policies diverged in a number of key areas. In a December 1970 meeting with Hervé Alphand, the top permanent official in the French Foreign Ministry, Kissinger "remarked that we did not have nervous breakdowns every time a Franco-American disagree-

Kissinger Transcripts: The Top Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow (New York: New Press, 1998), pp. 36–37; and Kissinger's comments in a meeting with Zhou Enlai, 10 November 1973, in Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts*, p. 175. See also Kissinger-Jobert Meeting, 22 May 1973, p. 13, in DNSA/KT00736. Kissinger had been aware of those trends for some time. See, especially, his notes of a 10 April 1965 meeting with Egon Bahr, Brandt's most important foreign policy adviser. Bahr reported that in the "scheme he and Brandt were considering," "a unified Germany would leave NATO" and "foreign troops would be withdrawn from its territory." See Doc. CK2349120291, in Declassified Documents Reference System [DDRS]. By 1973, Nixon and Kissinger had come to have a very low regard for Brandt: he was in their view a "fool" and a "muddle head." Kissinger-Shultz-Scowcroft Meeting, 29 March 1973(?), p. 1, in Digitized Memoranda of Presidential Conversations: Nixon Administration, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Digital Library, <http://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/dmemcons.asp> (hereinafter referred to as DMPC:Nixon/FPDL); and Nixon Meeting with Main Advisors, 12 April 1973, p. 4, in DMPC:Nixon/FPDL.

10. Kissinger-Pompidou Meeting, 18 May 1973, p. 7, in DNSA/KT00728.

11. See Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 389, 419; and Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 129.

12. See Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 105, 421; and Kissinger, *Troubled Partnership*, p. 58. This attitude was reflected in a comment Nixon made in his February 1970 meeting with Pompidou. "What we really need," he had told his colleagues, "was a healthy dose of French skepticism or cynicism in dealing with the Soviet Union." Nixon-Pompidou Meeting, 24 February 1970, pp. 4–5, in DNSA/KT00103.

13. See, for example, Kissinger, *Troubled Partnership*, p. 72; and Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 109.

ment appeared; that was the custom when Alphan was the Ambassador here in another period but it was not so now.”¹⁴

Those attitudes would have had a major impact on relations between the two countries even if de Gaulle had remained in power. As it was, the French had also shifted course in 1969. Pompidou, who came to power that year, was a Gaullist, but he was not de Gaulle. His was a “rationalized Gaullism,” as Georges-Henri Soutou calls it, a Gaullism shorn of the general’s eccentricities. The new president did not want to see the United States play only a peripheral role in European affairs. There needed to be a counterweight to Soviet power in Europe, and in Pompidou’s view only the United States could provide it. On that issue he and the new U.S. administration saw eye to eye. On the other great issue in European politics, the German question, the French and Americans also took basically the same line. Both of them were wary of what Brandt was doing, but, at least for the moment, they would not stand in his way.¹⁵

Given all this, it would have been amazing if relations between the two countries did not improve dramatically, and in fact during the early Nixon-Pompidou period the two governments were on excellent terms. Kissinger, in his memoirs, refers to a “degree of sharing of views unprecedented among allies,” and some of his meetings with Pompidou were indeed quite extraordinary.¹⁶ But what was occurring in the nuclear weapons area was of even

The references there are to de Gaulle, but that way of looking at things applied also to Pompidou’s France.

14. Kissinger-Alphan Meeting, 14 December 1970, p. 5, in National Security Council Files, Box 677, Folder “France Vol. VII,” Nixon Presidential Library (NPL) (hereinafter referred to as NSCF/—/France Vol.—/NPL with appropriate box and folder information). Alphan was ambassador in Washington from 1956 to 1965.

15. On Pompidou’s policy, a series of works by Georges-Henri Soutou are of fundamental importance: “L’attitude de Georges Pompidou face à l’Allemagne,” in Association Georges Pompidou, *Georges Pompidou et l’Europe: Colloque, 25 et 26 novembre 1993* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1995); “Le Président Pompidou et les relations entre les Etats-Unis et l’Europe,” *Journal of European Integration History* [JEIH], Vol. 6, No. 2 (2000), pp. 113–141—an English translation was published in Marc Trachtenberg, ed., *Between Empire and Alliance: America and Europe during the Cold War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), pp. 157–187—and “La problématique de la Détente et le testament stratégique de Georges Pompidou,” *Cahiers du Centre d’études d’histoire de la défense*, No. 22 (2004), pp. 32–55. On France’s policy toward West Germany during this period, see also Andreas Wilkens, *Der unstete Nachbar: Frankreich, die deutsche Ostpolitik und die Berliner Vier-Mächte-Verhandlungen 1969–1974* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1990); Markus Bernath, *Wandel ohne Annäherung: Die SPD und Frankreich in der Phase der neuen Ostpolitik 1969–1974* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001); and Gottfried Niedhart, “Frankreich und die USA im Dialog über Détente und Ostpolitik, 1969–1970,” *Franca: Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (2004), pp. 65–85, esp. 84–85.

16. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 964. See, especially, the record of their 18 May 1973 meeting, in DNSA/KT00728. See also Soutou’s discussion of this meeting in “Le Président Pompidou et les relations entre les Etats-Unis et l’Europe,” pp. 133–134. China was the only other government with

greater importance.¹⁷ From the start, both governments were interested in developing a relationship on this matter.¹⁸ Nixon and Kissinger wanted to support the French nuclear program. Kissinger told the French ambassador in April 1973 that de Gaulle “was basically right”: it was “too dangerous to have one country as the repository of nuclear weapons. We would like France to be a possessor.”¹⁹ U.S. policy in this area, as Nixon told Pompidou in 1973, had shifted 180 degrees from what it had been in the 1960s.²⁰ Pompidou, for his part, was eager to obtain U.S. help for the French nuclear program. He was not held back by any doctrinaire Gaullist notions that the French could not even talk to U.S. officials about such matters—that for the sake of French independence they would have to do everything entirely on their own. When Kissinger asked Pompidou in February 1970 whether they could talk about defense matters during the French leader’s forthcoming visit to Washington, Pompidou responded, “I can and I want to.”²¹ On the other hand, the U.S. administration, knowing how sensitive the French could be on the subject of independence, decided that no political preconditions would be laid down and that the U.S. negotiators would “*not* suggest that U.S. assistance” be “tied to greater French cooperation in NATO.”²²

which Kissinger was so open. On May 30 he gave the Chinese a copy of the record of his meeting with Pompidou. See Kissinger-Huang Meeting, 29 May 1973, p. 4, in DNSA/KT00740.

17. On this issue, see Pierre Mélandri, “Aux origines de la coopération nucléaire franco-américaine,” in Maurice Vaïsse, ed., *La France et l’atome: Études d’histoire nucléaire* (Brussels: Bruyant, 1994), pp. 77–94; Pierre Mélandri, “Une relation très spéciale: La France, les États-Unis et l’Année de l’Europe,” in Association Georges Pompidou, *Georges Pompidou et l’Europe*, esp. pp. 106–110; Soutou, “La problématique de la Détente,” esp. pp. 91–92, 97–98; and, especially, Maurice Vaïsse, “Les ‘relations spéciales’ franco-américaines au temps de Richard Nixon et Georges Pompidou,” *Relations internationales*, No. 119 (Fall 2004), pp. 345–362.

18. See Vaïsse, “Les ‘relations spéciales’ franco-américaines,” p. 360, and also the discussion on p. 3 of the more extensive manuscript version of this article (provided to me by Maurice Vaïsse).

19. Kissinger Meeting with Ambassador Jacques Kosciusko-Morizet, 13 April 1973, p. 9, in DNSA/KT00702. See also Kissinger’s comments to a high British official, Sir Burke Trend, on 19 April 1973, in Memorandum from Trend to the Prime Minister (dated 24 April 1973), pp. 2–3, in DNSA/KT00707.

20. Mélandri, “Aux origines de la coopération nucléaire franco-américaine,” p. 247.

21. Kissinger-Pompidou Meeting, 23 February 1970, in DNSA/KT00100.

22. Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger, 25 June 1970, in NSCF/677/France Vol. VI/NPL; emphasis in original. U.S. Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird had assumed that the U.S. government should ask for something in return for the nuclear assistance it would be offering—for example, “French participation in NATO defense studies.” See Draft Memorandum from Laird to the President, in Laird to Kissinger, 2 April 1970, p. 3, in NSCF/677/France Vol. VI/NPL. Laird’s suggestion was overruled. In Kissinger’s view the question of French relations with NATO was not of great importance in any case. “It is clear,” he wrote earlier that year, “that much of the discussion of integration versus national freedom of action is artificial and theological. In the end, all NATO members retain the capacity for unilateral military action; at the same time, in practice, they are unlikely to use them unilaterally except under most unusual and extreme circumstances.” Memorandum from Kissinger to Nixon on Military Relations with France, 23 February 1970, in NSCF/916/France—Pompidou Visit Feb. ’70 (1 of 3)/NPL. The French government, even under de Gaulle, and despite the general’s complaints about NATO, did not take the NATO structures too seriously. The only really important question was

So it is not surprising, given the changed attitudes of the two sides, that a certain relationship did develop. The United States began to provide very important information concerning France's existing systems, especially information that would help French missiles penetrate Soviet defenses. The French were pleased.²³ U.S. policy toward France had shifted in a fundamental way, which suggests that the language the Nixon administration was now using has to be taken seriously.

But if all this is true, how are we to understand what happened in the final year of the Nixon-Pompidou period? In 1973, as many observers have noted, relations between the two countries took a sharp turn for the worse. What went wrong? Why did the attempt to develop a close relationship fail? My goal here is to look at this issue in the light of a remarkable body of source material—not just French and American, but German and British—that has become available in the last few years. What light does the new evidence throw on these questions?

The End of Bretton Woods

It is easy enough for two countries to cooperate when they see eye to eye on key issues. But what happens when they disagree on some issue of major importance? The first great test of the relationship between France and the United States in the Nixon-Pompidou period came in 1971 with the collapse of the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates. The two countries had very different policies in that area. How well were they able to manage their differences? Some new international monetary system had to be worked out, and in fact a new system of market-based (or “floating”) exchange rates did eventually come into being. What does a study of the story here tell us about the basic nature of U.S.-French relations in this period?

The collapse of Bretton Woods in August 1971 with the U.S. decision to close the “gold window”—that is, to end the system that had allowed foreign

whether the U.S. president would decide to go nuclear if the alliance ever faced its moment of truth, and, if so, how and when he would do it. The plans that had been worked out in the NATO framework and the strategy documents that had been adopted would not have much bearing on the sort of decision that was made. See, for example, Couve de Murville's comments in a meeting with U.S. ambassador Charles Bohlen, 2 December 1963, *Documents diplomatiques français* [DDF] 1963, 2:576. For confirmation of the point that U.S. officials did not ask for anything in exchange for the nuclear help they were offering, see Defense Minister Debré's 11 March 1972 letter to Pompidou, quoted in Mélandri, “Une relation très spéciale,” p. 107.

23. See, especially, Mélandri, “Une relation très spéciale,” p. 107. For a discussion of how the nuclear relationship had developed, how matters stood in the spring of 1973, and how things might progress, see U.S. Defense Department, Response to NSSM 175, 11 May 1973, in NSCF/679/France Vol. XI/NPL.

governments to convert their accumulated dollars into gold at the official price of \$35 an ounce—came as no surprise. By the time the end came, the system was in crisis, and the basic problem had to do not with the policy of any particular government but with the system itself. The Bretton Woods regime was in practice a system of more or less fixed exchange rates. The dollar was convertible into gold at a fixed rate, and other currencies were convertible into dollars (considered, at the start, to be as “good as gold”), also at fixed rates.²⁴ The problem with such a system is that when the participating governments pursue different policies, especially monetary policies, payments imbalances are almost inevitable. If the U.S. rate of inflation is higher than that of America’s main trading partners, U.S. goods (in a fixed rate regime) will become increasingly overpriced abroad, and foreign goods will become a better deal in the United States. The balance of trade would thus shift, and other key elements in the balance of payments—above all, capital movements—would be affected in much the same way. By 1971 the United States was running a large balance-of-payments deficit, spending more for foreign goods, foreign assets, and foreign currency (including currency to meet the needs of U.S. military personnel stationed abroad) than it was taking in from U.S. exports, from U.S. investment earnings abroad, and in other more or less normal ways. The deficit was possible only because foreign governments and their central banks were willing to finance it by holding excess dollars or their equivalents. In theory, foreign central banks were entitled to exchange for gold the dollars they were accumulating, but the United States would have viewed that as an unfriendly act. In any case, an unending U.S. gold hemorrhage would lead to an official closing of the gold window, and few foreign governments wanted to bring down the par value system by forcing the Americans’ hand.

So the key question was how to deal with the persistent payments imbalances. In principle, under the Bretton Woods system, the parities could be adjusted. But in practice the surplus countries were reluctant to revalue their currencies upward, mainly because they did not want to hurt their export industries. The deficit countries were reluctant to devalue, largely because devaluation was viewed as something of a humiliation.²⁵ A devaluation of the dollar, moreover, was especially problematic because other countries were holding substantial parts of their reserves in dollars. One of the reasons those countries were holding dollars was that they had been told that dollar reserves

24. See, for example, John Williamson, *The Failure of World Monetary Reform, 1971–1974* (New York: New York University Press, 1977), p. 4.

25. See, for example, French finance minister Valéry Giscard d’Estaing’s characterization of de Gaulle’s attitude, quoted in Benedict Schoenborn, *La mésentente apprivoisée: De Gaulle et les Allemands, 1963–1969* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2007), p. 116.

were as “good as gold.” A devaluation of the dollar might be seen almost as a breach of faith, an admission that the surplus countries had been misled and that their dollar reserves were not as “good as gold” after all.²⁶ Moreover, if the dollar were devalued, they knew that their reserves would bring in less gold when exchanged. This might lead countries to lose faith in the dollar and cash in their dollar reserves for gold even at the new price. A devaluation thus might lead to a run on the dollar, causing the system to collapse. Some also believed that a devaluation might not have much of an effect on actual exchange rates and thus on the payments imbalance: a top European Economic Community (EEC) official predicted that if the United States devalued, “all European currencies would be devalued by the same percentage on the same day.”²⁷

This situation was not to anyone’s liking. The United States was in effect living beyond its means, and the Europeans, together with the Japanese, were picking up the tab. This led to a certain amount of resentment on the part of the surplus countries. De Gaulle was especially outspoken on the issue. But the Americans did not feel they were benefiting from the system.²⁸ They were not happy to be running a payments deficit—quite the contrary. The deficit was a burden that constrained their freedom of action both at home and abroad. They would have preferred, for example, to set policy on troop levels in Europe without having to worry about balance-of-payments considerations. And they would have preferred to manage the U.S. economy without, say, having to consider how the low interest rates needed to deal with unemployment might affect the payments deficit. As Nixon put it: “we just can’t have the American domestic economy constantly hostage” to the “international monetary situation.”²⁹ The payments deficit was unappealing for all sorts of reasons—not least because of the controls and protectionist pressures it had inspired³⁰—and by 1971 the U.S. government was more open to fundamental systemic change than one might think.

26. “An increase in the official gold price would break faith with all those who have helped us for a decade by holding large amounts of dollars.” Kissinger to Nixon, 25 June 1969, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, Vol. 3, p. 349 (hereinafter referred to as *FRUS*, with appropriate year and volume numbers).

27. Hendrik Houthakker, “The Breakdown of Bretton Woods,” in Werner Sichel, ed., *Economic Advice and Executive Policy: Recommendations from Past Members of the Council of Economic Advisors* (New York: Praeger, 1978), p. 54. See also George Shultz and Kenneth Dam, *Economic Policy beyond the Headlines* (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 114.

28. On this point, see the important study by Francis J. Gavin, *Gold, Dollars, and Power: The Politics of International Monetary Relations, 1958–1971* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

29. Nixon Meeting with Economic Advisers, 3 March 1973, Tape Transcript, in *FRUS, 1969–1976*, Vol. 3, p. 59.

30. See, for example, Paul Krugman’s comment on a paper by Richard Marston about capital controls under Bretton Woods: “The most striking result of the paper is its demonstration that the Bretton

By that point many economists had begun to concern themselves with these problems. Some wanted to move to a system of floating exchange rates, with rates set by the market.³¹ The major advantage of such a system, as the economist Milton Friedman pointed out, is that it “completely eliminates the balance-of-payments problem”—or, as the British-born economist Harry Johnson, another champion of the market-based system, put it, a system of floating exchange rates would automatically ensure balance-of-payments equilibrium.³² The exchange rate would simply be set at the point where demand for a particular currency was equal to the supply—the point, that is, at which payments were in balance with each other.

Academic economists were not the only ones who tended increasingly to favor a more flexible system. After a decade of chronic balance-of-payments problems, support for the Bretton Woods regime was no longer rock solid, and some people in business, government, and even banking circles were open to the idea of fundamental change. In the United States, the most influential “floater” was George Shultz, an economist by training, and a friend, disciple, and former colleague of Friedman’s. In 1971 Shultz was head of the Office of Management and Budget at the White House. Some key European officials, especially in West Germany and Italy, also favored a more flexible regime. But most officials, and probably most economists, were not quite ready to go all the way and replace Bretton Woods with a market-based system. Many still feared that without fixed parities the world might revert to the chaos of the 1930s, with its competitive devaluations and pernicious “beggar-thy-neighbor” monetary policies. That view was not based on a serious historical analysis of the earlier period, ignoring the fact, for example, that the world did

Woods system bore very little resemblance to the golden age of financial markets that many people now think that they remember. Capital controls were pervasive, and they led to large, systematic interest differentials.” In Michael Bordo and Barry Eichengreen, eds., *A Retrospective on the Bretton Woods System: Lessons for International Monetary Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 539.

31. Robert Roosa, a leading proponent of the fixed-parity system, thought in 1967 that at least 90 percent of academic economists seemed to accept the “theoretical case for fluctuating rates.” Milton Friedman and Robert Roosa, *The Balance of Payments: Free versus Fixed Exchange Rates* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1967), p. 177. The real figure was probably not that high, although most economists probably did favor the introduction of more flexibility into the system—for example, a “crawling peg,” or wider bands within which rates would be allowed to fluctuate. See Friedman’s own comments on this issue, pp. 133–134.

32. Friedman and Roosa, *Balance of Payments*, p. 15; and Harry Johnson, “The Case for Flexible Exchange Rates, 1969,” in *Further Essays in Monetary Economics* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1972), p. 199. The pro-market monetarist right of the economics profession was hardly alone in disliking the par-value system. The Keynesian left was also uncomfortable with a regime that made it more difficult for governments to pursue the monetary and fiscal policies that the domestic economic situation seemed to call for. John Maynard Keynes himself in the interwar period had pointed out the problems with the gold exchange standard. The term “golden fetters” that Barry Eichengreen used as the title of his book *Golden Fetters: The Gold Standard and the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) was taken from a passage in an essay Keynes published in 1932.

not have a simple floating exchange rate system in the 1930s. The very phrase “competitive devaluations” implied that currencies were still being pegged to a fixed standard.³³ But the myth about the 1930s was strong, and it was largely because of a visceral fear that radical change might lead to a 1930s-style disaster that the Bretton Woods system had the support it did.

So the Nixon administration, even in 1971, did not set out to bring down the system. Its primary goal was to deal with the payments deficit, and that meant getting its trading partners to accept a more reasonable structure of exchange rates. The administration would achieve that goal by not actively defending the dollar if it came under pressure. The United States would also make clear, either formally or informally, that it would not allow other countries to cash in the dollars they had accumulated for gold at the official price. The surplus countries would then have to choose whether to revalue their currencies upward or go on accumulating dollars. The assumption was that they would probably opt to revalue, and the world would get a better system of fixed parities. But if they went the other route, that would not be a major problem for the United States. The surplus countries would be soaking up dollars because they had chosen to do so, not because the U.S. government had come to them hat in hand and asked them to do so.³⁴

But although an exchange rate realignment was an important immediate goal, key U.S. officials were interested in getting something more than just a one-shot set of revaluations. Some of them were also, from the start, interested in bringing about a fundamental reform of the system—in cooperation with the surplus countries if possible, but unilaterally if the cooperative efforts

33. As Ragnar Nurkse pointed out in 1944, the “monetary authorities in most countries” in the 1930s “had little or no desire for freely fluctuating exchanges.” Ragnar Nurkse, *International Currency Experience: Lessons of the Inter-War Period* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1944), p. 122. Scholars nowadays tend to argue that the historical beliefs that sustained the Bretton Woods system were essentially incorrect. See, for example, Michael Bordo, “The Bretton Woods International Monetary System: A Historical Overview,” in Bordo and Eichengreen, eds., *Retrospective on the Bretton Woods System*, p. 31; Barry Eichengreen and Jeffrey Sachs, “Exchange Rates and Economic Recovery in the 1930s,” *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (1985), pp. 925–946; and Eichengreen, *Golden Fetters*, esp. pp. 4, 21–22. Eichengreen writes: “According to the conventional wisdom, the currency depreciation made possible by abandoning the gold standard failed to ameliorate conditions in countries that left gold and exacerbated the Depression in those that remained. Nothing could be more contrary to the evidence” (p. 21).

34. Houthakker, “The Breakdown of Bretton Woods,” pp. 50–53; and Hendrik Houthakker, “Cooling Off the Money Crisis,” *Wall Street Journal*, 16 March 1973, p. 10. Houthakker was a Harvard economics professor who served on Nixon’s Council of Economic Advisers from 1969 to 1971. See also Kissinger to Nixon, 25 June 1969, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 3, pp. 345–351, especially the recommendation on p. 351 that the United States should “pursue a passive balance of payments policy while pursuing the negotiations for monetary reform.” (Kissinger did not draft this document; as he often admitted, international economics was not his area of expertise.) The aim of the 25 June memorandum was to prepare the president for an important meeting on international monetary policy. No record of that meeting has been found (*ibid.*, p. 345 n. 3), but the session is discussed in Houthakker, “Breakdown of Bretton Woods,” p. 53.

failed. Those who favored this course were under no illusions that the sorts of reforms they had in mind would be easy to achieve.

The crisis, though long expected, came to a head in mid-1971. The new secretary of the treasury, John Connally, laid out the policy in May. The crisis would be allowed to develop “without action or strong intervention by the U.S.” At an appropriate time, the gold window would be closed, and trade restrictions would be imposed. This would lead, at least for the time being, to a system of floating rates. The main goal was to get the surplus countries to revalue their currencies, but the United States would make clear—both for bargaining purposes and as a fallback position if revaluation negotiations failed—that it could live indefinitely with the floating rate system.³⁵ Nixon approved this course of action and wanted to “move on the problem,” not “just wait for it to hit us again.”³⁶ The new measures were announced on 15 August. The gold window was closed, a border tax was imposed. Nixon had gone on the offensive. The tone of U.S. policy in this area was nationalistic. The emphasis was still on getting the Europeans and the Japanese to accept a substantial realignment of exchange rates, but the goal of systemic change had not disappeared entirely. According to Shultz, who was in a position to know, the 15 August package “was designed to be a signal that the United States was seeking a fundamental change not only in existing exchange rates but also in the monetary system itself.”³⁷

Shultz’s influence at this time was on the rise. By late 1971, Nixon had evidently come to share the Shultz view that a major structural reform was needed and that it would be a mistake to go back to the “old system of parities, but with different exchange rates.”³⁸ This was probably why the question of a devaluation of the dollar in terms of its gold price was now so important. If the price of the dollar could be set in terms of gold, then why should all the exchange rates not be set by international agreement? That was the old system, and the basic goal now for Shultz and, increasingly, for Nixon, was to move on to something better. But Connally, who was being criticized for his

35. Treasury Paper, 8 May 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 3, pp. 423–427, esp. 425.

36. Huntsman to Connally, 8 June 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 3, p. 443. The Nixon tapes provide some extraordinary insights into U.S. policymaking at this point. Some key passages were transcribed and presented in Luke Nichter, “Richard Nixon and Europe: Confrontation and Cooperation, 1969–1974,” Ph.D. Diss., Bowling Green State University, 2008, ch. 3.

37. Shultz and Dam, *Economic Policy*, p. 115.

38. Editorial Note, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 3, pp. 521–522. See also a letter of 8 September 1971 to Under Secretary of the Treasury for Monetary Affairs Paul Volcker from Shultz’s assistant director, Kenneth Dam (he and Shultz later wrote a book together), cited in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 3, 179 n. 1, and warning (in the editor’s paraphrase) that “focusing on quantitative goals before agreeing on the type of international monetary system the administration wanted might constrain long-term options.” See also Nixon-Kissinger Telephone Conversation, 28 October 1971, in Kissinger Telephone Conversations Collection, DNSA/KA06727.

rough tactics, was under pressure to settle, and he in effect offered to devalue the dollar as part of a rate realignment package.³⁹ Nixon, who had made clear he did not favor devaluation, was angry.⁴⁰ But the Connally offer could not be rescinded. A series of negotiations—between the West Germans and the French; then between Nixon, Kissinger, and Pompidou in the Azores; and, finally, in late December 1971 between all the major trading nations at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington—followed in rapid order, leading to an agreement that set new parities but did not restore convertibility.

The United States, however, did little to “defend” the new rates.⁴¹ Shultz had taken over from Connally as secretary of the treasury in early 1972, and the choice not to defend the rates was in line with Shultz’s basic approach to the problem. His goals were more ambitious than Connally’s had been. He wanted a fundamentally new system in which the market would play the central role in setting exchange rates. But he was no Texas cowboy. His methods were subtle and indirect. He thought of himself as a strategist who sought to “understand the constellation of forces present in a situation” and tried to arrange them so that they pointed “toward a desirable result.” The aim was not to dictate the terms of a settlement but “to get the right process going” and allow things to take their course.⁴²

Shultz’s style was thus not to force his views directly on other people. He was a “conciliator and consensus builder” and could “work with almost inhuman patience to bring a group into agreement upon a decision that all could support, at times submerging his own preferences.”⁴³ The most striking example of this was his willingness in mid-1972 to accept a “par value system supported by official convertibility of dollar balances,” provided the burden of adjustment was shared equally by both surplus and deficit countries.⁴⁴ A plan of that sort (which, however, would also allow countries to “float their currencies”) was announced in September 1972.⁴⁵ The plan was well received be-

39. See, for example, Paul Volcker and Toyoo Gyohten, *Changing Fortunes: The World’s Money and the Threat to American Leadership* (New York: Times Books, 1992), pp. 85–87.

40. Nixon Memorandum, 2 November 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 3, p. 528; and Editorial Note, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 3, p. 582. See also Nixon-Kissinger Phone Conversation, 28 October 1971, in DNSA/KA06727; Allen Matusow, *Nixon’s Economy: Booms, Busts, Dollars, and Votes* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998), pp. 173, 176; and Robert Leeson, *Ideology and the International Economy: The Decline and Fall of Bretton Woods* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 140–141.

41. See Volcker and Gyohten, *Changing Fortunes*, pp. 103–104.

42. George Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scribner’s, 1993), pp. 30–31.

43. Volcker and Gyohten, *Changing Fortunes*, p. 118.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

45. See “Major Elements of Plan X,” 31 July 1972, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 3, p. 646; and Editorial Note, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 3, p. 655. The text of Shultz’s 26 September 1972 speech laying out

cause it showed that the U.S. government was serious about reform. For Shultz, however, a negotiation based on this kind of plan was not the only way to bring a new system into being. For him, the road to reform had two lanes, “one of negotiations and the other of reality. A conclusion would be reached only when these two lanes merged and the formal system and the system in actual practice came together.”⁴⁶ A system of floating exchange rates came into being de facto with the collapse of the Smithsonian agreement in early 1973. The two lanes converged when the reality of the floating rate system was recognized by the Jamaica agreement of January 1976.

What does this story tell us about U.S. policy toward Europe in this period? Does it give us any insight into the question of why Franco-American relations took the course they did in the Nixon-Pompidou period? The first point to note is that the floating exchange rate system did not come about by accident. By early 1972, the U.S. administration had a strategy. Key officials such as Shultz, backed to a certain extent by Nixon, knew what they were doing. They were not trying to maintain a system in which the United States had special rights. The French had complained, under both de Gaulle and Pompidou, that in the Bretton Woods system the United States had enjoyed a kind of right of seignorage. The United States could run deficits, and the rest of the world would have to finance those deficits by holding dollars that could not be cashed in for gold. Americans could pay for what they wanted, even buy up European firms, with dollars created by their government.⁴⁷ But in a floating exchange rate system, no foreign government would have to hold dollars if it did not want to. The “privileges” that the United States “enjoyed” under Bretton Woods would disappear. The dollar would become a more normal currency. That was what U.S. leaders wanted. For them, Bretton Woods was a straitjacket. They complained constantly about the “asymmetries” of the system and wanted, as Shultz put it, “to gain for the United States some of the freedom of action for its own exchange rate that was available to all other countries.”⁴⁸

this proposal was published in *The New York Times* on 27 September. It is interesting to compare the accounts of this plan in Shultz's and Volcker's memoirs; one would hardly think they were describing the same proposal. See Volcker and Gyohten, *Changing Fortunes*, pp. 119–120; and Shultz and Dam, *Economic Policy*, pp. 126–127.

46. Shultz and Dam, *Economic Policy*, p. 127. Shultz used the two-track metaphor at the time. See Nixon-Kissinger-Shultz Meeting, 3 March 1973, Tape Transcript, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 83; and Nixon Meeting with Shultz, Ash, and Stein, 21 January 1974, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 216.

47. See, for example, the transcript of a 4 February 1965 de Gaulle press conference in Charles de Gaulle, *Discours and messages*, Vol. 4 (Paris: Plon, 1970), p. 332; Alain Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Fayard, 1997), p. 77; and the transcript of a 23 September 1971 Pompidou press conference in Georges Pompidou, *Entretiens et discours*, 3 Vols. (Paris: Plon, 1975), Vol. 2, p. 40.

48. Shultz and Dam, *Economic Policy*, p. 119.

The French were much more committed to the idea of a fixed rate system, but they were not horrified by the new U.S. policy. They were not too upset even by the nationalistic rhetoric Nixon and Connally adopted when the gold window was closed in August 1971. As a politician, Pompidou appreciated the way Nixon had turned a potential liability—something that could easily have been portrayed as practically a confession of national bankruptcy—into a political asset.⁴⁹ As a Gaullist, he could hardly blame the United States for pursuing a policy based on its own national interest. After complaining for years about Bretton Woods—and, especially, about the U.S. deficits and the special role the dollar played in the system—the French could scarcely complain now that the United States was determined to put an end to the deficits and make the dollar a more normal currency. Pompidou recognized that “the reserve role of the dollar is actually a burden” and agreed that “no currency should have this theoretical privilege.”⁵⁰

Pompidou certainly believed that a fixed-rate system of some sort was essential. This was in part because he accepted the conventional view about the 1930s—a view that one of the main French officials involved with these matters at the time, Claude Pierre-Brossolette, later characterized as a “myth.”⁵¹ Pompidou’s interest in maintaining a fixed-rate system also stemmed from his desire to maintain a slightly undervalued franc for domestic economic purposes, something possible only with a regime of fixed, or at least managed, exchange rates.⁵² (The irony here is that policies that sought to keep exchange rates artificially low in order to stimulate the domestic economy had a certain 1930s-style “beggar thy neighbor” feel.)⁵³ But Pompidou and other key French officials were intelligent enough to see that U.S. officials were not

49. Pompidou, *Entretiens et discours*, Vol. 2, p. 42.

50. Pompidou-Kissinger Meeting, 14 December 1971, p. 3, in DNSA/KT00410.

51. Pompidou, *Entretiens et discours*, Vol. 2, p. 37; and Comité pour l’histoire économique et financière de la France, *La France et les institutions de Bretton Woods, 1944–1994: Colloque tenu à Bercy les 30 juin et 1er juillet 1994* (Paris: Ministère de l’Économie, des Finances et de l’Industrie, 1998), pp. 111–112. See also a comment made at the Bercy conference by Pompidou’s economics adviser Jean-René Bernard. Pompidou, he said, “éprouvait une très grande difficulté à concevoir un système radicalement différent du système des parités fixes: je pense qu’il s’agit là d’une opinion quasi métaphysique, quasi religieuse” (p. 125). Bernard’s own views, as this passage suggests, were probably more moderate at the time. See Soutou, “L’attitude de Georges Pompidou face à l’Allemagne,” p. 311 n. 88.

52. See Bernard’s remarks to that effect at another conference: Éric Bussière, ed., *Georges Pompidou face à la mutation économique de l’Occident, 1969–1974: Actes du Colloque des 15 et 16 novembre 2001 au Conseil économique et social* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), p. 109. See also Éric Bussière, “Georges Pompidou et la crise du système monétaire international,” *ibid.*, p. 85.

53. Note in this context Connally’s reaction when the EEC representative rejected the U.S. proposal to end the payments deficit (with the argument that the proposed change was “too ambitious” because the world had gotten used to the situation that had developed). The U.S. government, Connally replied, could not accept the idea that “the export market should be used or can be used for the purpose of providing prosperity at home to the detriment of other nations around the world.” Luciano

just being selfish. The French could see some merit in the argument that the fixed-rate system was fundamentally defective and that radical change might be necessary. The sense seemed to be growing that maybe France was behind the curve intellectually, that maybe the whole idea of a market-based system deserved to be taken more seriously, that maybe French thinking was too rigid, too locked into the clichés of the past.⁵⁴ The French might not have been thrilled by what the United States was doing, but they were by no means prepared (as Pompidou told the West German foreign minister in November 1971) to “go to war” with the United States over this issue. The Europeans were neither strong enough nor united enough to pursue a tough anti-American policy, nor would such a policy have been in their interest.⁵⁵

To be sure, French policy hardened after it became clear that the Smithsonian agreement was empty—that the United States did not intend to defend the December 1971 parities and were thus renegeing on the assurances they had given at the Azores meeting.⁵⁶ The new situation led to major changes in French policy. The European countries, for the most part, were not going to defend the Smithsonian parities entirely on their own by absorbing as many dollars as they had to in order to keep their own exchange rates from

Segreto, “États-Unis, Europe et crise du système monétaire international (1968–1973),” in Bussière, ed., *Georges Pompidou face à la mutation économique de l'Occident*, p. 37.

54. Thus, for example, Pierre-Brossolette said at a meeting with J.-R. Bernard on 30 March 1973, almost certainly referring to the Americans, “la flexibilité n'était pas seulement dans les taux de change; elle était également dans les esprits.” See Bussière, “Georges Pompidou et la crise du système monétaire international,” p. 102. The implication was that the French were still too rigid in comparison. See also a commentary published on 7 September 1971 by Raymond Aron, who among other things was France's most distinguished political analyst: Raymond Aron, “Fin des parités fixes?” reproduced in Georges-Henri Soutou, ed., *Raymond Aron: Les articles de politique internationale dans Le Figaro de 1947 à 1977*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Éditions de Fallois, 1997), p. 982. Aron viewed the whole question of fixed versus floating exchange rates as very much an open issue, even intellectually. Looking back on the period, Bernard felt that the French had not been intellectually prepared to deal with these issues, and that it was only later that their way of thinking became more like that prevailing in the international financial community. See his comments in Bussière, ed., *Georges Pompidou face à la mutation économique de l'Occident*, p. 111. A vague feeling that this was the case probably had already begun to take shape at the time. Pompidou was more attached to the par value system, but as he himself admitted, he had no expertise in this area, despite his background in banking. See Pompidou-Schmidt Meeting, 10 February 1973, in *Akten zur auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1973* (AAPD 1973), pp. 223–224. This suggests that he was perhaps more open to the views of other people in this area than one might have thought.

55. For Pompidou's comment to German foreign minister Walter Scheel, see Segreto, “États-Unis, Europe et crise du système monétaire international,” p. 40. For the German text, see Pompidou-Scheel Meeting, 19 November 1971, in AAPD 1971, p. 1767. For the softening of the French view in late 1971, see also McCracken to Nixon, 24 November 1971, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 3, pp. 567–568.

56. “On a été déloyal avec nous,” Pompidou said in this context in early 1973. See Jobert, Notes of the 14 February and 7 March 1973 Cabinet Meetings, Association Georges Pompidou, Paris, quoted in Laurent Césari, “Les relations personnelles entre Nixon, Pompidou et leurs entourages,” unpub. ms., p. 8. For the U.S. assurances, see Pompidou-Kissinger Meeting, 13 December 1971, p. 3, in DNSA/KT00407; Nixon-Kissinger-Pompidou Meeting, 13 December 1971, 4 p.m., pp. 6, 11, in DNSA/KT00408; and Pompidou-Kissinger Meeting, 14 December 1971, p. 1, in DNSA/KT00410.

rising, and the French in particular would obviously not go along with a pure dollar standard of that sort. If a par value system was desirable and the United States refused to be part of it, then it made sense to try to establish at least a European monetary system of some kind.⁵⁷ Indeed, when the Smithsonian system collapsed in early 1973 and the world moved de facto to a floating exchange rate regime, Pompidou accepted the notion, which the Germans had been suggesting for some time, of a joint European float against the dollar.⁵⁸ But Pompidou had been slow to accept this idea. He might have agreed in principle to the need for a European counterweight to U.S. power in this area, but in practice he had from the start been reluctant to move ahead too quickly with the establishment of a European monetary system and had rejected the idea of a joint float when the West Germans had proposed it in 1971 and 1972.⁵⁹ In deciding to participate in the joint float in March 1973, the French were not making an irrevocable decision. In January 1974, just ten months later, they left the European “snake,” as it was called, and floated their own currency.

Did the plan fail, at least for the time being, because the U.S. administration disliked the idea of a freestanding Europe—and, thus, of a monetarily and economically united Europe—and had set out to torpedo it?⁶⁰ This issue is more complex than one might think. On the one hand, the U.S. officials most deeply involved with these monetary problems—above all Treasury Secretary Shultz—had no objection in principle to “Europe floating against the United States”—certainly no objection on economic grounds.⁶¹ Shultz, in

57. See Soutou, “L’attitude de Georges Pompidou face à l’Allemagne,” pp. 292–293.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 292.

59. See Robert Frank, “Pompidou, le franc et l’Europe,” in Association Georges Pompidou, *Georges Pompidou et l’Europe*, pp. 348–363, esp. pp. 356, 361–362; and Pompidou’s comments quoted in Gérard Bossuat, “Le président Georges Pompidou et les tentatives d’Union économique et monétaire,” in Association Georges Pompidou, *Georges Pompidou et l’Europe*, p. 422. The issue had come up before. De Gaulle proposed a single European currency to the Germans in 1964—without, according to Giscard, fully understanding its political implications—but the Germans rejected the idea. The French brought up the issue again in 1968–1969. See Schoenborn, *Mésentente apprivoisée*, pp. 116–119, 139.

60. See, for example, Segreto, “États-Unis, Europe et crise du système monétaire international,” p. 32, where the author refers to the alleged U.S. goal (in 1971) of ending what remained of a “common European position with regard to the problems with the U.S. currency.” On this issue, see also Dimitri Grygowski, “Les États-Unis et l’unification monétaire de l’Europe: Bilan d’ensemble et perspectives de recherche, 1968–1998,” *Journal of European Integration History*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2007), esp. pp. 119–122.

61. Leeson, *Ideology and the International Economy*, p. 137. See also Volcker’s account in *Changing Fortunes*, pp. 112–113, of Shultz’s views on the subject. See also the report of a top British official—Cromer to Foreign Office, 16 February 1973, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, p. 26—recounting his meetings with Shultz, Volcker, and Federal Reserve Chairman Arthur Burns in February 1973: “they were not opposed to a common European monetary policy including a common float.” One of the arguments for a U.S. policy of suspending convertibility was that such a step might “provide a major impetus toward closer European integration.” See Memorandum from Kissinger (but not drafted by him) to

fact, welcomed the idea because it would in effect bring a floating exchange rate system into being. His top assistant in this area told the French finance minister in February 1973 that “a joint European float would be fine with the U.S., and it would be consistent with the evolution of international monetary arrangements.” The treasury secretary understood that the joint float would be accompanied by “anti-American rhetoric,” but he was prepared to accept that kind of thing philosophically and did not believe it would be sufficient reason for the U.S. government to oppose the joint float.⁶²

On the other hand, neither Nixon nor Kissinger approached the issue in quite the same way as Shultz. The president by this point agreed with Shultz about what made sense in purely economic terms, but he felt that the issue could not be decided solely on that basis and that the political side of the problem was of fundamental importance.⁶³ To take the Shultz view—that the United States should not intervene in the foreign exchange markets in any massive way but should just let the dollar float—would give the wrong message; it would, Nixon said, be “just too much of a ‘To hell with the rest of the world’” sort of policy.⁶⁴ If the administration went that route, he thought, the Europeans would “pull together” and say: “‘The United States doesn’t care,’ and that hurts our bigger game with regard to Europe.”⁶⁵ A more active policy would mean that the U.S. government would have “a leadership role with the Europeans that we don’t have otherwise”—although he went on to add (quite revealingly): “Now, I don’t [know] what the hell we do with it.”⁶⁶

Nixon’s basic feeling was that “political considerations must completely override economic considerations” in this area. This, he noted, was “going to

Nixon, 25 June 1969, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 3, p. 348. For the views of several leading U.S. economists on the question, none of whom were alarmed by the prospect of joint European action in this area, see the record of a conference held at the time and cosponsored by the State Department and the Brookings Institution: Lawrence Krause and Walter Salant, eds., *European Monetary Unification and Its Meaning for the United States* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1973), esp. pp. 183 (Max Corden), 297 (Henry Wallich), and 309 (Harry Johnson).

62. Volcker Report of Meeting with Giscard, 11 February 1973, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 44; Nixon Meeting with Economic Advisors, 3 March 1973, Tape Transcript, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 56; and Nixon-Kissinger-Shultz Meeting, 3 March 1973, Tape Transcript in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, pp. 75–76, 81.

63. See, for example, Nixon Meeting with Economic Advisors, 3 March 1973, Tape Transcript, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 69; and Nixon-Kissinger-Shultz Meeting, 7 March 1973, Tape Transcript, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 106.

64. Nixon-Shultz-Burns Meeting, 6 February 1973, Tape Transcript, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 12.

65. Nixon-Kissinger-Shultz Meeting, 3 March 1973, Tape Transcript, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 74. See also Nixon Meeting with Economic Advisors, 3 March 1973, Tape Transcript, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 69.

66. Nixon-Kissinger-Shultz Meeting, 3 March 1973, Tape Transcript, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 84.

be a bitter pill for Shultz to swallow but he must swallow it.”⁶⁷ So the treasury secretary was instructed to “be forthcoming” with the Europeans, more forthcoming than he himself was inclined to be.⁶⁸ This applied especially to the West Germans. “We don’t want” West German finance minister Helmut Schmidt, Kissinger told Shultz, “to be in a domestic position at home where he turned to the Americans” and “got totally kicked in the teeth,” because if the Nixon administration was blamed for the measures the German government would have to take, that would “shift the whole pattern within Germany.”⁶⁹

This did not mean, however, that Nixon and Kissinger wanted to cooperate with the Europeans in this area. In particular, it did not mean that on the issue of the joint float they wanted the United States to play a helpful role. There was a “growing tendency,” Nixon thought, for the Europeans to “turn inward” and to distance themselves from the United States.⁷⁰ The policy of “building Europe” was coming to have an increasingly sharp anti-American edge. French policy especially was interpreted in those terms. Paul Volcker, under secretary of the treasury for monetary affairs, was afraid that the French were using the “so-called European solution” for political purposes. The “European solution,” he said, was simply “a euphemism for saying ‘Let’s leave the United States out of the world—and go our independent course.’” That, he said, was the French view. Their goal was “to posture Europe vis-à-vis the United States politically.” But it was not just the French. There was a risk that Western Europe as a whole would move in that same direction.⁷¹

Nixon seemed to agree. Both he and Kissinger now wondered whether European integration was in America’s interest.⁷² The president saw a risk that Europe would turn into a “Frankenstein monster”; the reason he was interested in an interventionist monetary policy was that “it might serve our interests in keeping the Europeans apart.”⁷³ Kissinger also thought it might be a

67. Nixon to Kissinger, 10 March 1973 (draft), in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 119.

68. Nixon-Kissinger-Shultz Meeting, 7 March 1973, Tape Transcript, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, pp. 106, 111.

69. *Ibid.*, pp. 110, 112. What Kissinger probably had in mind here was that if the United States were not “forthcoming,” the Germans might feel they had to float their currency on a national basis, a move that might lead to a dramatic appreciation of the mark, with devastating consequences for the Federal Republic’s export-oriented economy.

70. Nixon Meeting with Economic Advisors, 3 March 1973, Tape Transcript, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 69.

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 62–63, 70.

72. Nixon-Kissinger-Shultz Meeting, 3 March 1973, Tape Transcript, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, pp. 74, 79.

73. Nixon to Kissinger, 10 March 1973 (draft), in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 119; and Nixon-Kissinger-Shultz Meeting, 3 March 1973, Tape Transcript, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 83.

good idea “if we can force [the Europeans] to deal separately with us.”⁷⁴ U.S. officials made clear to Brandt (who had informed Nixon that the Europeans were considering what “joint action” they could take in the monetary area) that European integration was no longer viewed as an end in itself but only as a “step towards increased Atlantic cooperation.”⁷⁵

So the whole point of an interventionist policy in this area was not to help the Europeans with their monetary problems, but to keep the Europeans from coming together as a bloc. The idea was that the United States might be able to achieve that goal by selectively intervening on a country-by-country basis. U.S. officials took for granted that they could not oppose the Europeans head on: “We couldn’t bust the common float without getting into a hell of a political fight,” Kissinger said. The United States had to do what it could “to prevent a united European position without showing our hand.” He emphasized that this policy was not based on an assessment of U.S. economic interests: his objection to what the Europeans wanted to do “was entirely political.” He had learned from intelligence reports that all of the administration’s enemies in the West German cabinet “were for the European solution,” a disclosure that pretty much decided the issue for him.⁷⁶ A year later, at a time when U.S. problems with Europe were coming to a head, he laid out his thinking on the issue in somewhat greater detail. “We are not,” he said, “opposed to a French attempt to strengthen the unity of Europe if the context of that unity is not organically directed against us. So I am not offended by the float idea as such, or by common institutions. If, however, it is linked to the sort of thing that is inherent in the Arab initiative [i.e., the Europeans’ plan at that point for a “dialogue” with the Arabs, which Kissinger viewed as a hostile move], as it seems to be, then we have a massive problem. Then we have the problem that we have got to break it up now.”⁷⁷

It is not clear, however, that the U.S. government actually did much to

74. Nixon-Kissinger-Shultz Meeting, 3 March 1973, Tape Transcript, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 79.

75. Brandt to Nixon, 2 March 1973, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 49; and Nixon to Brandt, 3 March 1973, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 92.

76. Kissinger-Simon Telephone Conversation, 14 March 1973, in DNSA/KA09752; and Kissinger-Simon Telephone Conversation, 15 March 1973, in DNSA/KA09779. Extracts were also published in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, pp. 123, 126. The following month another intelligence report about Brandt was circulated to top U.S. officials. “Apparently,” Federal Reserve chief Arthur Burns wrote in his diary on 3 April 1973 that “we know everything that goes on at German cabinet meetings.” Arthur Burns Journal II, p. 60, in FDPL.

77. Secretary’s Staff Meeting, 22 March 1974 (dated 26 March), p. 50, in DNSA/KT01079. Note also a comment Kissinger made in a 6 March 1974 meeting with Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger: “I am convinced we must break up the EC. The French are determined to unify them all against the United States.” See DMPC:Nixon/FDPL.

prevent the joint float from working. The Treasury Department controlled policy at the operational level, and people like Shultz had no wish to torpedo the project. The point of a European monetary system was not to conduct an economic war against the United States (although it was sometimes interpreted in those terms, both by some U.S. officials at the time and by some scholars more recently).⁷⁸ The Europeans were in no position to pursue that kind of policy, and the United States did not really object to the European plan on economic grounds. Shultz could not ignore what Nixon and Kissinger were telling him, but they were saying different things; the guidance was far from clear. Shultz was told to “be more forthcoming,” but Kissinger also made clear that he did not want the joint float to succeed. The latter goal, as the Treasury Department saw it, meant “less intervention,” which was in line with the Shultz position.⁷⁹ The treasury secretary had plenty of leeway to decide which goals to emphasize, and the choices he made were in line with his own policy preferences. In any event, it is hard to see how a policy of selective intervention could actually have achieved the goals Nixon and Kissinger had set for themselves. As Volcker pointed out, “almost inevitably, intervention on our part with appreciating European currencies will contribute to the viability of the snake.”⁸⁰ If the United States, for example, intervened to limit the rise in the Deutsche Mark, that would automatically reduce pressure on the other currencies tied to the mark in the system—making it easier on the French, for instance, to stay in the snake because the franc would also not have to rise so sharply.

So if the joint float failed, it was probably not because of U.S. sabotage. As long as the U.S. government was able to regain its own freedom of action, key officials like Shultz did not much care what sort of monetary system the Europeans worked out among themselves. The effort failed for the same reason the Bretton Woods system had failed. Just as Bretton Woods had resulted in an overvalued dollar, the European snake, by tying the franc so tightly to the strong Deutsche Mark, had resulted in an overvalued franc.⁸¹ A belief in the importance of a united Europe was not enough to override basic economic realities. For Pompidou as for Nixon, political and economic auton-

78. See Watson to Secretary of State, 20 September 1972, in Department of State Central Files (DOSCF), Subject/Numeric Files (Subj-Num) 1970–73, Box 2278 (POL FR-US 1-10-72), Record Group (RG) 59, U.S. National Archives, College Park, MD (NARA). For a historian’s perspective, see, for example, Bossuat, “Le président Georges Pompidou,” pp. 425, 427.

79. Kissinger-Simon Telephone Conversation, 14 March 1973, in DNSA/KA09752. See also *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 123.

80. Volcker to Shultz, in Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger, 13 March 1973, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, p. 122.

81. See Frank, “Pompidou, le franc et l’Europe,” p. 365.

omy was from the start what mattered most. The French national interest was more important than “building Europe.”⁸² French officials also saw a special problem having to do with the central role the Deutsche Mark played in the European monetary system. Their fear was that in a European monetary system too much power might be concentrated in West German hands. The French president did not want to exchange the dollar standard for a mark standard.⁸³

Pompidou might not have liked the basic thrust of U.S. policy in this area, but it is an exaggeration to say that the “limited improvement in U.S.-French political relations” that had taken place in the early part of the Nixon-Pompidou period “was overwhelmed by the increasingly poisonous atmosphere created by U.S.-European economic tensions.”⁸⁴ Economic issues played a key role in the story, but in themselves they were not enough to drive the two countries apart. The United States, for example, did not oppose the joint float for economic reasons. In a different political context, it would have had no objection to the plan. And the general French position on monetary issues did not pose any real problem for the U.S. government. The tough line the French took in the negotiations meant that a formal agreement would be harder to achieve, but the United States was content to live indefinitely with the existing “floating” arrangements. Nor was the French government overly concerned about this set of issues. When Pompidou met with U.S. leaders in Iceland in mid-1973, he played down the political importance of these issues. He saw “no great difficulty concerning economic relations between the U.S. and the European Community.” Those sorts of problems, he thought, were “easy to solve.”⁸⁵ The real problem lay elsewhere.

The Year of Europe

On 23 April 1973, Henry Kissinger gave a major speech called “The Year of Europe.” The Atlantic alliance, he argued, was in trouble. America and Eu-

82. *Ibid.*, pp. 349–355.

83. Frank, “Pompidou, le franc et l’Europe,” p. 359; and Soutou, “L’attitude de Georges Pompidou face à l’Allemagne,” pp. 290–291.

84. Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance since World War II* (New York: Twayne, 1992), p. 173.

85. Pompidou-Nixon Meeting, 31 May 1973, 10 A.M., p. 8, in DNSA/KT00742. The French record of Pompidou’s comments at the meeting accords with the U.S. version. See Éric Roussel, *Georges Pompidou, 1911–1974*, Rev. Ed. (Paris: J. C. Lattès, 1994), pp. 555–556. Pompidou took a relaxed line, in particular, on the question of the reform of the international monetary system (Roussel, *Georges Pompidou*, p. 564). The original document is in the Pompidou Presidential Papers, Collection 5AG2, Box 1023, Archives Nationales, Paris (hereinafter referred to as 5AG2/AN, with relevant box number). On this general issue, see also Pompidou-Heath Meeting, May 22, 1973, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, pp. 4, 6, 98.

rope were drifting apart. “In economic relations the European Community” had “increasingly stressed its regional personality,” whereas the United States tended to think in terms of a “wider international trade and monetary system.” In the political sphere, one found the same sort of structural problem. The United States was a global power, whereas the Europeans had essentially “regional interests.” The time had come to deal with the tensions this situation had given rise to, and one had to deal with them comprehensively. “The political, military, and economic issues in Atlantic relations,” Kissinger said, “are linked by reality, not by our choice nor for the tactical purpose of trading one off against the other. The solutions will not be worthy of the opportunity if left to technicians.” They had to be “addressed at the highest level.” In 1972, Nixon had transformed the U.S. relationship with two Cold War adversaries, the Soviet Union and China. In 1973, the main goal would be to reinvigorate the Western alliance by working out a “new Atlantic charter,” a “blueprint” for a “revitalized Atlantic partnership.”⁸⁶

Kissinger was worried about the future of the alliance—worries that were coming into focus in part because of what was occurring on the economic front. Could the U.S. government just sit on its hands and allow the confrontation with Europe to develop? Maybe he could head off the conflict; maybe some sort of dramatic move was called for. In September 1972 Kissinger gave a preview of the policy to Franz-Josef Strauss, leader of the Christian Social Union, one of the main opposition parties in West Germany. It was “absolutely essential,” he told Strauss, that “we have a fundamental review” of U.S.-European relations after the U.S. presidential elections in November. If the basic problems were not worked out, Europe and the United States would find themselves “fighting about individual issues year after year. And after a while the economic problems will make it impossible to maintain the security relationship.”⁸⁷

He made a similar argument to the French ambassador, Jacques Kosciuszko-Morizet, the following March, about a month before the “Year of Europe” speech:

Our basic thinking is this: We believe that if we go into trade negotiations without a framework, confrontation will almost certainly result. If our President has

86. Henry Kissinger, “The Year of Europe,” April 23, 1973, in *Department of State Bulletin*, 14 May 1973, pp. 593–598. Numerous works dealing with “The Year of Europe” and related issues have appeared in recent years. See Daniel Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the Dream of Political Unity* (London: Tauris, 2008), esp. ch. 4; Jussi M. Hanhimäki, “Kissinger et l’Europe: Entre intégration et autonomie,” *Relations internationales*, No. 119 (2004), pp. 319–332; Silvia Pietrantonio, “L’anno che non fu? L’anno dell’Europa e la crisi nelle relazioni transatlantiche, 1973–1974,” Ph.D. Diss., University of Bologna, 2008; and Aurélie Gfeller, “Re-envisioning Europe: France, America and the Arab World, 1973–74,” Ph.D. Diss., Princeton University, 2008, ch. 1.

87. Kissinger-Strauss Meeting, 10 September 1972, p. 5, in DNSA/KT00553.

to make each decision one at a time, on its own merits, he will be motivated by domestic political pressures. We also have defense issues to discuss. It is helpful to get an overall framework to discuss economics, defense and political issues. We cannot have a monetary crisis every six months, and we both have an energy crisis.⁸⁸

Kissinger elaborated on the point in another meeting with Kosciusko-Morizet a couple of weeks later, this time laying greater emphasis on the political issues. He knew, for example, that the French were worried “that maybe some sort of condominium between the US and the USSR could emerge.” To make sure that no one would think that something like that was possible, he argued, the whole tenor of the U.S.-European relationship to change. Above all, the squabbling had to end—they had to avoid getting into a “guerrilla type of situation between Europe and the United States in which the public considers we have endless disagreements and no common action.”⁸⁹ The two sides, in Kissinger’s view, needed to look at the larger picture and deal comprehensively with all the major issues they faced.

The Europeans, especially the French, did not respond the way Kissinger had hoped. The U.S. administration, they thought, was trying to group the allies around the United States, in order to set policy for the alliance as a whole. The sort of system Kissinger was trying to create, Pompidou later said, implied a “certain subordination” of the allies to the United States.⁹⁰ Michel Jobert, the French foreign minister, used stronger language. Kissinger’s geopolitical vision, he wrote, was clear: the whole world would revolve around American power, Europe would be “confined to a purely regional role,” and the process the United States hoped to begin would “consecrate American hegemony over the western world.”⁹¹

Although U.S. leaders had gotten some sense that the speech might cause problems, they did not at first realize how negative the official French reaction would be.⁹² After Kissinger met with Kosciusko-Morizet on 19 March and ex-

88. Kissinger–Kosciusko-Morizet Meeting, 29 March 1973, p. 2, in DNSA/KT00690.

89. Kissinger–Kosciusko-Morizet Meeting, 13 April 1973, pp. 6–7, in DNSA/KT00702.

90. Pompidou Meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka, 18 September 1973, in Mélandri, “Une relation très spéciale,” p. 97.

91. Michel Jobert, *Mémoires d’avenir* (Paris: Grasset, 1974), pp. 231–232. See also Michel Jobert, *L’autre regard* (Paris: Grasset, 1976), p. 288. This sort of interpretation can still be found even among U.S. historians. Frank Costigliola, author of the most important U.S. study of Franco-American relations in the post–World War II period, views the speech as a “blunt reassertion of American hegemony.” Kissinger, he says, was asking for a “near veto over the EEC’s economic decisions.” This, in his view, is what was meant by the passage in the speech about how economic, military, and politics issues were linked. See Costigliola, *France and the United States*, pp. 174–175.

92. According to Jobert’s later account (*Mémoires d’avenir*, p. 237), he had warned Kissinger when he was in Paris before the Iceland summit conference that France was deeply opposed to the project. The U.S. record of Jobert’s 22 May 1973 meeting with Kissinger, however, has Jobert predicting that

plained the initiative, the ambassador flew to Paris to brief Pompidou in person. “Yes, I agree,” Pompidou said, giving what Kosciusko-Morizet called the “green light” for the “Year of Europe” speech.⁹³ When Kissinger met with Pompidou on 18 May, the French president did not seem at all hostile. He was “not particularly shocked” by the much-criticized passage in the speech that referred to the Europeans’ “regional” interests, and he agreed that although it was necessary to consider each specific problem “in its own context,” it was also important to keep the broader picture in mind “on all occasions.” “If some were shocked by your ideas,” he told Kissinger, “I personally did not find your ideas so far from reality.”⁹⁴

Kissinger viewed the French president as the key to the whole Year of Europe plan and, as he saw it, the main goal of the Nixon-Pompidou meeting scheduled to begin in Reykjavik at the end of May was to set in motion the process of drafting a new Atlantic charter.⁹⁵ It therefore came as something of a shock to him, after a long, late-night talk with Jobert shortly after arriving in Iceland, that “the French clearly harbor the most deep-seated suspicions of

Pompidou would take a conciliatory line on the issue when he met Nixon in Reykjavik: “President Nixon will have to outline the concrete lines, the framework, of his conception. I don’t think Mr. Pompidou will be opposed to the idea.” Kissinger-Jobert Meeting, 22 May 1973, p. 5, in DNSA/KT00736.

93. “Kosciusko-Morizet Comment,” in Association Georges Pompidou, *Georges Pompidou et l’Europe*, p. 209. Kissinger told the British much the same thing at the time. See Kissinger Meeting with British Officials, 10 May 1973, p. 15, in Henry A. Kissinger Office Files [HAK OF]/62/HAK London Trip/NPL. Jobert gave a rather different account in *L’autre regard*, p. 288. But Jobert was not the only one who falsely claimed that the Europeans had not been consulted. British Prime Minister Edward Heath often made the same sort of claim, even though U.S. officials prior to the speech had indicated what they had in mind and had explicitly asked for British views. For Heath’s claims, see Armstrong to Acland, 19 June 1973, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, p. 133 (an account of Heath’s 18 June meeting with W. W. Rostow); Cabinet Minutes, 20 June 1973, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, p. 137; Catherine Hynes, *The Year That Never Was: Heath, the Nixon Administration and the Year of Europe* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2009), pp. 103, 208; and Peter Hennessy and Caroline Anstey, *Moneybags and Brains: The Anglo-American ‘Special Relationship’ since 1945* (Glasgow: University of Strathclyde, 1990), p. 17 (quoting Heath’s remarks in a 1990 interview). For evidence that the British knew what the Americans had in mind and were in fact consulted in advance about the U.S. initiative, see, for example, Acland to Armstrong, 19 December 1972, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, p. 2; and especially Kissinger Meeting with Cromer and Sykes, 5 March 1973, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, pp. 24–29. The U.S. record is in HAK OF/62/UK Memcons, Jan–April 1972/NPL. For more evidence, see Hynes, *The Year That Never Was*, esp. pp. 65, 88, 124. For the British side of the “Year of Europe” story, see also Niklas Roszbach, *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship: Britain, the US and the EC, 1969–74* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); and Keith Hamilton, “Britain, France, and America’s Year of Europe, 1973,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (December 2006), pp. 871–895. (Hamilton was coeditor of the DBPO volume on the “Year of Europe.”)

94. Kissinger-Pompidou Meeting, 18 May 1973, pp. 1–2, in DNSA/KT00728. See also the French account of this meeting in 5AG2/117/AN, where the point is made even more strongly. Pompidou made the same point in a meeting with Heath on 21 May 1973. See Roussel, *Pompidou*, p. 548; and 5AG2/1015/AN. Heath’s reaction to that part of the Kissinger speech was a good deal more hostile.

95. “Proposed Outcome of Meeting between Presidents Nixon and Pompidou in Iceland,” n.d., in NSCF/949/Pompidou-Nixon Meeting, May–June 1973, 1 of 3/NPL; and Kissinger to Nixon, “Meeting with President Pompidou—Iceland,” n.d., in NSCF/949/Pompidou-Nixon Meeting, May–June 1973, 1 of 3/NPL.

our motives in launching our Atlantic initiative.” Kissinger reported to Nixon that “Pompidou is laboring under certain serious misapprehensions regarding our purposes.”⁹⁶ It was therefore important to clear up those misconceptions, and efforts to do so began even before the Reykjavik meeting, triggered in all probability by what had appeared in the newspapers.

Above all, the administration wanted to make clear to the Europeans, especially to the French, what the real U.S. goals were. “They think we are aiming at a perpetuation of U.S. hegemony,” Kissinger told the president and other top officials on 25 May. “This is not our objective at all.”⁹⁷ He had taken the same line in a meeting with Kosciusko-Morizet on 14 May. It did not make sense, he said, for someone like him who admired de Gaulle to want to “return to the Kennedy period, and the same [is true] for the President. . . . We don’t disagree with your views.” “We have no view or no intention,” he said, “to create one undifferentiated Atlantic Community in which the Europeans have to follow Washington directly.” The passage in his speech about the regional role of Europe had been taken entirely out of context. If Europe wanted to play a global role, the United States would welcome it. As for the argument that by linking economic, political, and military issues U.S. officials were trying to “blackmail” Europe—that is, that they were implicitly threatening the Europeans that the security relationship would be put at risk if they did not give way on economic matters—Kissinger said that this, too, was based on a misunderstanding. If the United States wanted to play hardball, the political leadership would simply leave the economic negotiations to the economic agencies. Putting them in a political framework would lead to a more conciliatory U.S. stance. But the basic point was that the United States was not pursuing a hostile or confrontational policy. Kissinger wanted to pursue the initiative together with the French. “We believe in a strong France,” he said. In particular, U.S. leaders “would be prepared to listen to your ideas in the nuclear field.”⁹⁸

Kissinger hammered away on these points in subsequent meetings with Jobert and Pompidou.⁹⁹ And Nixon, at Kissinger’s suggestion, made much the same argument in his 31 May meeting with Pompidou in Reykjavik.¹⁰⁰ The notion that in pushing the Year of Europe project the United States was “seek-

96. Kissinger to Nixon, 30 May 1973, in NSCF/949/Pompidou-Nixon Meeting, May–June 1973, 1 of 3/NPL.

97. Kissinger Meeting with Nixon et al., 25 May 1973, in DNSA/KT00738.

98. Kissinger–Kosciusko-Morizet Meeting, 14 May 1973, pp. 2–3, in DNSA/KT00723.

99. Kissinger–Jobert Meeting, 17 May 1973, in DNSA/KT00727; and Kissinger–Pompidou Meeting, 18 May 1973, in DNSA/KT00728.

100. Kissinger to Nixon, 30 May 1973, in NSCF/949/Pompidou-Nixon Meeting, May–June 1973, 1 of 3/NPL; and Nixon–Pompidou Meeting, 31 May 1973, 10 A.M., in DNSA/KT00742.

ing hegemony” was just not true, Kissinger told Jobert on 17 May. He and Nixon were “not against French autonomy,” he said. Why, given everything they had said and done, would they pursue such a policy? “It would be insane to first humiliate our friends and then face the Soviet Union alone,” he said. “That can’t be an American objective.”¹⁰¹ Kissinger’s meeting with Pompidou the next day was particularly important because he again linked the basic concept to the U.S. policy of helping the French nuclear program:

We do not seek to dominate Europe, on the contrary. We want a strong Europe. We have always supported the European nuclear effort. As I recently told your Ambassador, we are not pushing but we are ready to discuss with you, either directly or if you prefer through the British, what we could do to strengthen your military capacity.

In a Europe of that sort, the French, he said, would play the key role. The fact that the United States was willing to move forward with its policy of helping the French nuclear program proved that these assurances about U.S. policy were not to be dismissed as mere words—this, it seems, was what Kissinger was now suggesting.¹⁰²

The United States was indeed ready to deepen the nuclear relationship with France. Nixon and Pompidou agreed at Reykjavik to move the discussion into a new area—the “holy of holies,” as Soutou put it—the design of the nuclear cores themselves.¹⁰³ Kissinger had indicated in April, before he gave the “Year of Europe” speech, that he was prepared to do more for the French nuclear weapons program. Most of the State Department, he said, “would like to throttle” the French nuclear program “because they are in the year 1965,” but he himself was willing to move ahead. The U.S. government was prepared to discuss the issue with the new French armed forces minister, Robert Galley, and “we are waiting for you to approach us.”¹⁰⁴ After Reykjavik, Kissinger still seemed determined to proceed with that policy. “Some of our experts,” he told Jobert on June 8, “think you don’t appreciate the characteristics of Soviet defenses. If you wanted, you could send quietly some of your technical experts to Washington, so our experts could explain this and how you could deal with it. Warhead design, and some suggestions. Without changing your program.”¹⁰⁵

101. Kissinger-Jobert Meeting, 17 May 1973, pp. 2–3, in DNSA/KT00727.

102. Kissinger-Pompidou Meeting, 18 May 1973, p. 7, in DNSA/KT00728. On the linkage with the nuclear question, see also Kissinger-Jobert Meeting, 17 May 1973, p. 4, in DNSA/KT00727.

103. Soutou, “La problématique de la Détente,” p. 97.

104. Kissinger-Kosciusko-Morizet Meeting, 13 April 1973, pp. 8–9, in DNSA/KT00702.

105. Kissinger-Jobert Meeting, 8 June 1973, p. 17, in DNSA/KT00748. For a discussion of some of the problems the French bomber force had in penetrating Soviet air defenses, see Central Intelligence Agency, “French Development of Nuclear Weapons Delivery Systems,” n.d. (probably written in the

The French, however, were not convinced by Kissinger's arguments about the meaning of the Year of Europe initiative, and even the prospect of a much closer nuclear relationship did not induce them to go along with his policy. At Reykjavik, it seemed that Pompidou might be willing to cooperate. He and Nixon agreed on a procedure, more or less. Kissinger would meet with his French, British, and West German counterparts, but not as a group. Eventually the deputy foreign ministers of all the allied countries would meet to see whether some statement of principles could be worked out.¹⁰⁶ But then in July the procedure was changed. The Europeans announced (in Kissinger's words at the time) that "they planned to get together as the Nine to prepare their response and that in the meantime they would not communicate with the U.S."¹⁰⁷ This was in spite of the fact that Pompidou had said at Reykjavik that he could not imagine the European Community (EC) serving as the U.S. negotiating partner on this issue because the EC had no political substance and was simply an economic entity.¹⁰⁸ Once the EC had drafted the plan, the Danish foreign minister would present it to the United States, but he was to be "only a messenger." He could not negotiate on behalf of Europe as a whole.

The situation, as Kissinger saw it, was absurd: "the countries who can negotiate with us won't talk and those who can talk with us can't negotiate."¹⁰⁹ Kissinger suspected that he was being given the runaround and concluded, with bitterness, that the Europeans, especially the French, had no interest in cooperating with the United States in this area. To one extent or another, they

late 1960s), in CIA Electronic Reading Room (CIA/ERR), http://www.foia.cia.gov/search_options.asp.

106. Nixon-Pompidou Meeting, 31 May 1973, 10 A.M., pp. 7, 10, 12–13, in DNSA/KT00742; and Nixon-Pompidou Meeting, 31 May 1973, 3 P.M., pp. 3–4, in DNSA/KT00743. See also Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, pp. 178–179.

107. Kissinger Meeting with Rusk, Bundy, McCloy et al., 28 November 1973, p. 5, in DNSA/KT00928. See also Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, pp. 188–189, 701; and Hynes, *Year That Never Was*, pp. 156–159. A top British official, Sir Thomas Brimelow, had noted in March that this sort of procedure "would, of course, rule out any question of a meaningful dialogue." Meeting between Kissinger and British Officials, 5 March 1973, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, p. 28.

108. Nixon-Pompidou Meeting, 31 May 1973, 10 A.M., p. 8, in DNSA/KT00742. Kissinger was "totally amazed [he told Jobert's successor, Jean Sauvagnargues, in July 1974] when your Government decided to oppose" the Year of Europe initiative. "Jobert," he said, "told me that the one thing France did not want was for the U.S. to talk to the E.C. He said that he preferred for us to deal with the French and not build up the E.C. and make it move faster." Kissinger-Sauvagnargues Meeting, 4 July 1974, in DNSA/KT01240. In the immediate post-Reykjavik period the French were "unwilling to participate in or agree to any common European approach to the trans-Atlantic relationship." Douglas-Home to Cromer, 8 June 1973, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, p. 116. See also, in this context, Jobert's remarks in his meeting with Heath and Douglas-Home, 2 July 1973, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, pp. 4, 10, 146; and Hynes, *Year That Never Was*, pp. 126, 146.

109. Kissinger Meeting with Rusk, Bundy, McCloy et al., 28 November 1973, p. 5, in DNSA/KT00928. Kissinger repeatedly used this sort of phrase to characterize the situation. See, for example, Kissinger-Jobert Meeting, 26 September 1973, p. 7, in DNSA/KT00815; and Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 189. For Kissinger's reaction at the time, see Kissinger Meeting with British Officials, 30 July 1973, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, p. 179.

were hostile to the whole Year of Europe idea. It was particularly galling to him that they were not even willing to use the word “partnership” in the declaration.¹¹⁰ The initiative was supposed to improve America’s relationship with Europe, but it had been “turned almost into a European-American confrontation.”¹¹¹ As a result, no matter what draft was eventually worked out—and Kissinger assumed (correctly, as it turned out) that the declaration would be “finished in a tolerable way”—the “emotional content” had been “drained from the declaration exercise.”¹¹² But that outcome showed how foolish it had been, as Kissinger later admitted, to try to “base foreign policy on an abstract quest for psychological fulfillment.”¹¹³

What is to be made of the Year of Europe affair? Looking back, the whole episode comes across as a little bizarre. “In Europe,” as Helmut Schmidt later wrote, Kissinger’s proclamation of a Year of Europe “aroused only disbelieving astonishment, mixed with mockery,” and it is not hard to understand why people reacted that way.¹¹⁴ There were certainly serious problems in the U.S.-European relationship, but could one really deal with them by drafting a declaration of principles? It is hard to see, in fact, how a declaration of this sort, which was bound to be full of platitudes and generalities, would change anything of substance. The inclusion of the word “partnership” in the text, for example, would scarcely have made the United States into more of a hegemon than it would otherwise have been.

On the other hand and for the same reason, the plan for a “new Atlantic charter” was essentially harmless, and the only thing that made the episode politically important was the fact that the Europeans, led by the French, opposed it. A mere declaration would change nothing of substance. If the United States wanted to pursue a “linkage” policy—if the U.S. government, for example, wanted to force the Europeans to make concessions in the eco-

110. Kissinger Meeting with Rusk, Bundy, McCloy et al., 28 November 1973, p. 7, in DNSA/KT00928. He made this point on many occasions. See, for example, Kissinger-Scheel Meeting, 3 March 1974, pp. 13, 20, in DNSA/KT01052; and Kissinger Meeting with German Ambassador von Staden, 26 October 1973 (dated 27 October 1973), p. 7, in William Burr, ed., “The October War and U.S. Policy,” National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 98, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB98/>, Doc. No. 81 (hereinafter referred to as NSAEBB98/—with appropriate document number). The EC had come up with a draft declaration of 20 September 1973. The sentences containing the word “partnership” were included in a revised draft the United States proposed on 29 September. The first document was published in *The New York Times* on 24 September 1973 and the second on 9 November 1973. On French objections to the word “partnership,” see Gfeller, “Re-envisioning Europe,” pp. 69–70, 79–81.

111. Nixon to Brandt (drafted by Kissinger), 30 July 1973, in Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 191.

112. Kissinger Meeting with Rusk, Bundy, McCloy et al., 28 November 1973, pp. 5, 7, in DNSA/KT00928.

113. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 381.

114. Helmut Schmidt, *Men and Powers: A Political Retrospective* (New York: Random House, 1989), p. 150.

conomic area by making clear that the security relationship was at risk—it would scarcely need a formal “charter” to do so.¹¹⁵ A “new Atlantic charter” would not enable the United States to rule over a bloc of countries it would otherwise not dominate in that way. As Kissinger pointed out to Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in March 1974, “the ultimate independence and freedom of action of a country depend on its specific weight, not its declarations.”¹¹⁶

Given that obvious point, it is hard to understand why the French reacted as negatively as they did to the Year of Europe initiative. Looking back, Kissinger was puzzled that “we found ourselves embroiled with France in the same sort of nasty confrontation for which we had criticized our predecessors.” “The reasons for it,” he wrote, “are not fully clear to me even today.”¹¹⁷ He blamed Jobert for the conflict and for pursuing “the old Gaullist dream of building Europe on an anti-American basis.”¹¹⁸ But Pompidou, not Jobert, was calling the shots on the French side, and Pompidou was not, as he himself said, an “européen acharné”—that is, he was not fiercely committed to the idea of “building Europe.”¹¹⁹ He did certainly want the Europeans to develop an identity of their own, and for that to happen he knew the United States would have to be kept at arm’s length. But his general view had been that one had to proceed cautiously. It was not wise, as he saw it, to force the pace of that process, or to alienate the United States unnecessarily as the European countries came together, first economically and then politically.¹²⁰ He understood that for the time being Europe, as a unified political entity, did not re-

115. Nixon and Kissinger certainly did think that all these issues had to be linked, but for the sorts of linkages they had in mind, see, for example, their comments in a meeting with Shultz, 3 March 1973, Tape Transcript, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, pp. 84–85, 88; and Kissinger-Shultz Telephone Conversation, 15 August 1973, in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, pp. 191–193. See also the record of Nixon’s farewell meeting with West German ambassador Rolf Friedemann Pauls, 7 March 1973, in AAPD 1973, pp. 352–354; and Nixon’s discussion of that meeting in a telephone conversation with Kissinger the same day, in DNSA/KA09695, in which Nixon stressed the importance of “let[ting] these people know that they can’t have it both ways”—meaning that the Europeans could not oppose the United States on economic issues and still expect the United States to defend them. See also Hynes, *Year That Never Was*, p. 86.

116. Kissinger-Brezhnev Meeting, 26 March 1974, p. 24, in DNSA/KT01086. At this point in the conversation, Kissinger and Brezhnev were talking about France and the French insistence on retaining a free hand.

117. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 163.

118. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

119. See Roussel, *Pompidou*, p. 338.

120. See, for example, Pompidou’s remarks in a meeting with Brandt, 22 January 1973, in AAPD 1973, p. 84. See also his comments in another meeting with Brandt, held on 4 December 1971, in Roussel, *Pompidou*, p. 650: “Toute la difficulté des années à venir consistera à pousser vers un progrès politique de l’Europe—et économique bien sûr—sans inquiéter les États-Unis, sans se couper d’eux, sans les rendre hostiles, ce qui empêcherait nos progrès.” See also 5AG2/1011/AN. See also Pompidou’s comment on a November 1972 telegram from Kosciuszko, in Mélandri, “Une relation très spéciale,” p. 119. For Pompidou’s thinking on the general issue of the “construction of Europe,” see Roussel, *Pompidou*, pp. 17–21, 494–496.

ally count for much. The EC, he told Nixon in May 1973, had “no political reality”; it was “only an economic reality.” Pompidou was prepared, however, to live with that situation: “But Europe is what it is; there is nothing we can do about it.”¹²¹

Yet, even as Pompidou uttered those words, his attitude was shifting. He had already begun to take a more “European” line, a line that suggested the Europeans should come together by separating themselves more from the United States. The problem of a common European policy, he said, came down to “a common attitude toward America”: “[A]n independent Europe will define itself essentially by its relationship with the United States.”¹²² Europe would have to pursue its own policy, a policy different from that of the United States, almost as an end itself. As Jobert put the point in a meeting with the West German foreign minister in March 1974: “There is no doubt that if we are too obliging with [the Americans], we will count for nothing.”¹²³

Why the shift in policy? Pompidou’s basic feelings about “building Europe” had not suddenly changed. The real taproot lay elsewhere. The United States was now dealing directly and seriously with the Soviet Union, and Pompidou naturally was uneasy about where that process might lead. Were the two superpowers going to settle major issues, including European issues, by themselves, over the heads of the Europeans? It was obvious, he thought, that the U.S.-Soviet rapprochement might be at Europe’s expense.¹²⁴ Given the kinds of negotiations that were either going on or were planned—the Strategic Arms Limitation talks (SALT), the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction talks (MBFR), the talks leading to the U.S.-Soviet agreement on preventing nuclear war (PNW)—this was a major source of concern not just in France but in West Germany. Pompidou and his top advisers were increasingly worried about the prospect of a U.S.-Soviet “condominium”—of Wash-

121. Pompidou-Nixon Meeting, 31 May 1973, 10 A.M., pp. 5–6, 8, in DNSA/KT00742. See also the French record of the meeting, which has Pompidou saying much the same thing, in Roussel, *Pompidou*, pp. 555–556; and 5AG3/1023/AN. Pompidou’s cautious attitude on the issue of “building Europe” comes out again and again in the documents: on the monetary issue, as Robert Frank has stressed (“Pompidou, le franc et l’Europe”); on the military question (Roussel, *Pompidou*, p. 506; 5AG2/1015/AN; and Gfeller, “Re-envisioning Europe,” pp. 92–93); and on the issue of political cooperation (Gfeller, “Re-envisioning Europe,” pp. 94, 116–117).

122. Pompidou interview with the Italian magazine *Epoca*, reported in *Le monde*, 10 February 1972, p. 2, and quoted in AAPD 1973, pp. 1241–1242 n. 10. See also the comments of the German ambassador in Paris on this issue: von Braun to Foreign Office, 11 October 1973, in AAPD 1973, p. 1542.

123. The West German document quotes the Jobert comment verbatim: “A coup sûr, si nous sommes complaisants avec eux, nous serons complètement effacés.” Jobert-Scheel Meeting, 1 March 1974, in AAPD 1974, p. 268.

124. “Un tel rapprochement,” Pompidou told Helmut Kohl in late 1973, “risque obligatoirement de se faire aux dépens de l’Europe.” Pompidou-Kohl Meeting, 15 October 1973, in Roussel, *Pompidou*, p. 657; and 5AG2/1012/AN. See also Soutou, “La problématique de la Détente,” p. 92.

ington and Moscow becoming too intimate with each other—and of the Europeans being eclipsed.¹²⁵ The Year of Europe project was seen in that context. The condominium idea implied that each superpower would dominate its own bloc. The proposal for a more solid Western alliance, it seemed, might well be rooted in this kind of thinking.

Over and over, Kissinger and Nixon denied, as explicitly as they could, that their goal was to bring about a world of this sort.¹²⁶ From their point of view, the argument that the Year of Europe initiative was to be understood in such terms made little sense. If the United States wanted to deal with the Soviet Union *à deux*, it would just do so.¹²⁷ If U.S. policy was to ignore the Europeans, why would U.S. officials be trying so hard to develop a stronger relationship with the European allies, especially with France?

Kissinger went to great lengths to explain what the United States was up to in some of the areas that most concerned the French, especially the PNW agreement and MBFR. Contrary to what Jobert suggested both at the time and in his memoirs, the PNW agreement came as no surprise. The French government had not only been told about the negotiations; it had been given a clear sense of what the U.S. negotiators had objected to in the original Soviet draft, why they were insisting on changes, and why they felt agreement with Moscow in this area was desirable.¹²⁸ In an extraordinary meeting with

125. For French fears along these lines, see Jean-Bernard Raimond's comments of May 1973 in Soutou, "La problématique de la Détente," p. 96. See also Marie-Pierre Rey, "Georges Pompidou, l'Union soviétique et l'Europe," in Association Georges Pompidou, *Georges Pompidou et l'Europe*, p. 163; Jean-Bernard Raimond, "Georges Pompidou et l'Union soviétique," in Association Georges Pompidou, *Georges Pompidou et l'Europe*, pp. 181–183; and Roussel, *Pompidou*, p. 17, ch. 27. Some U.S. scholars, on the other hand, question whether this was seen as a real problem. See, for example, Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1994), p. 383. The text of the PNW agreement, signed on 22 June 1973, was published in the *Department of State Bulletin*, No. 1778 (23 July 1973). For the West German view, see, for example, the July 1973 document quoted in Andreas Wilkens, "Westpolitik, Ostpolitik, and the Project of the Economic and Monetary Union: Germany's European Policy in the Brandt Era (1969–1974)," *Journal of European Integration History*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (1999), p. 89. The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) was of particular importance in this context. Franz-Josef Strauss, for example, thought that with the NPT a "super-cartel of the world powers" would come into being. See Strauss to Kiesinger, 15 February 1967, in Dirk Kroegel, *Einen Anfang finden! Kurt Georg Kiesinger in der Aussen- und Deutschlandpolitik der Grossen Koalition* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1997), p. 92.

126. See, for example, Nixon-Pompidou Meeting, 31 May 1973, 10 A.M., pp. 4–5, in DNSA/KT00742.

127. See, for example, Kissinger-Scheel Meeting, 3 March 1974, pp. 3–4, 14, in DNSA/KT01052.

128. For the claim that the French were kept in the dark, see Jobert, *L'autre regard*, p. 289. Kosciusko-Morizet later said that Pompidou, at his 18 May meeting with Kissinger, did not conceal the fact that he disagreed with U.S. policy: "parce ce qu'on revenait à l'ancienne politique américaine de domination, tout au moins à l'habitude calculée de mettre ses alliés et amis devant le fait accompli, sans aucune consultation." See "Kosciusko-Morizet Comment," p. 210. See also Kissinger's comment at the time about how "the folklore in Europe" was that the PNW agreement "was sprung without any warning." Jobert, he added, "says this constantly and no one contradicts him." Kissinger Meeting with

Pompidou on 18 May 1973, Kissinger explained in some detail how the PNW agreement fit into the grand scheme of U.S. foreign policy. The détente policy, he said, should not be misunderstood. The United States was not opting for the Soviet Union over China:

There is no sense in choosing the strongest against the weakest. If the Soviet Union managed to render China impotent, Europe would become a Finland and the United States would be completely isolated. It is therefore consistent with our own interests not to want and to try not to permit that the Soviet Union should destroy China. In fact, it is more a question of playing China against the Soviet Union. We have never used such frankness in discussing this with another Head of State. It is extremely important that you understand our real strategy. How can one support China? Today, such an idea would not be conceivable for American opinion. We need several years to establish with China the links which make plausible the notion that an attack directed against China could be an attack on the fundamental interests of the United States. This is our deliberate policy. We have the intention to turn rapidly toward China in the space of two or three years.

It is nevertheless important that this movement not serve as a pretext for a Soviet attack against China. It is consequently necessary that our policy be such that it does not seem to be directed against the Soviet Union and that détente is carried on in parallel with the Soviet Union; that the Soviet Union uses its power in conditions of peace and not of tension; finally that there would be a certain juridical obligation which would be violated if the Soviet Union undertook a military attack against China.

Rusk, Bundy, McCloy et al., 28 November 1973, p. 12, in DNSA/KT00928. Jobert did in fact claim in a meeting with British leaders “that the Americans had not consulted the Europeans before reaching their agreements with the Soviet Union.” Jobert-Heath-Douglas-Home Meeting, 2 July 1973, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, p. 5. Some scholars also aver that the Europeans were not informed. See, for example, Costigliola, *France and the United States*, p. 176. This view, however, is incorrect. See especially Mélandri, “Une relation très spéciale,” pp. 106, 113. For the U.S. briefings of the French on this issue, see Kissinger–Kosciusko-Morizet Meeting, 6 September 1972, in NSCF/HAK OF/24/HAK’s Germany, Moscow, London, Paris Trip 9/72—Misc. Cables and Documents/NPL; Kissinger-Pompidou Meeting, 15 September 1972, quoted at length in Roussel, *Pompidou*, pp. 524–527; Kissinger–Kosciusko-Morizet Meeting, 13 April 1973, p. 6, in DNSA/KT00702; and Kissinger–Kosciusko-Morizet Meeting, 14 May 1973, pp. 4–5, in DNSA/KT00723. The British were also kept informed, and a British official (Brimelow) played a key role in drafting the agreement—something that made British opposition to the agreement particularly galling. As Kissinger said at the time, “we are fed up because Brimelow drafted the nuclear agreement and then didn’t back it.” See Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 286; Hynes, *Year That Never Was*, pp. 120–121; and especially Stephen Twigge, “Operation Hullabaloo: Henry Kissinger, British Diplomacy, and the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (September 2009), pp. 627–654. For Kissinger’s irritation with British behavior on this issue, see, for example, Kissinger-Schlesinger Meeting, 5 December 1973, p. 3, in DMPC:Nixon/FDPL. See also Kissinger-Schlesinger Meeting, 9 August 1973, in DMPC:Nixon/FDPL. For Kissinger’s initial briefing of the British on this affair, see Record of Discussion with Dr. Kissinger at Washington on 28 July 1972, Annex, in Trend to Prime Minister, 31 July 1972, in PREM 15/1362, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNAUK), Kew; also in DNSA/KT00533. Other British documents relating to the PNW affair are in DBPO III, Vol. 4, Doc. Nos. 15, 17, 22, 32, 44, 59, 61, 95.

U.S. policy in the PNW affair, he pointed out, was to be understood in this context. “We aimed to gain time, to paralyze the Soviet Union.” The question was not whether the Soviet Union should be resisted but how this should be done. U.S. officials knew what they were doing: their strategy might “be complex, but it is not stupid.” They were not capitulating to leaders in Moscow, they were trying “to enmesh them,” and it was “absolutely essential” that Pompidou understand what the United States was up to.¹²⁹

This was an important statement of U.S. policy, and Pompidou understood it as such. He did not object to the policy that Kissinger outlined; from his point of view, there was little to object to.¹³⁰ And indeed, even on the face of it, it is hard to understand why the French (and other Europeans) found the PNW agreement so distasteful. The key provision that people objected to, Article IV in the final agreement of 22 June, called on the two superpowers to consult with each other if a situation developed that could lead to a nuclear war in which either or both of them might be involved. Why should they not talk to each other in such a case? And what would the signing of such an agreement actually change? If it was to the interest of the two governments to talk about any issue, then they would talk. The PNW agreement would not change the fundamental situation one way or the other. So why then was there a problem?

The U.S. government also tried to explain to the French why they should not be troubled by what the United States was doing on the force reduction issue. The French did not like the idea of an MBFR agreement, which implied that central Europe would have a special military status. This was

129. Kissinger-Pompidou Meeting, 18 May 1973, pp. 4–6, in DNSA/KT00728; and (for the French record) 5AG2/117/AN, pp. 4–8. Although Nixon was not quite so explicit, he had taken a similar line in a meeting with the British prime minister in February. See Nixon-Heath Meeting, 2 February 1973, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, p. 22. See also Kissinger’s comments about the point of the PNW talks in Twigge, “Operation Hullabaloo,” pp. 692, 697: “The nuclear Treaty,” in Kissinger’s view, “would be a kind of carrot, dangling perpetually just ahead of the Soviet donkey’s nose until the poor animal was finally lured into some suitable stable where it could not do much harm.” For Nixon and Kissinger the policy of détente was a tactic. The real aim was to deal with what they saw as a growing Soviet threat. See, for example, Kissinger-Pompidou Meeting, 20 December 1973, p. 2, in DNSA/KT00968; and (for the French record) Roussel, *Pompidou*, p. 603. (In the French record, Kissinger refers explicitly to the “tactique de la détente.”) For Kissinger’s account of the PNW affair, see *Years of Upheaval*, pp. 274–286, 926.

130. Kissinger-Pompidou Meeting, 18 May 1973, pp. 7–8, in DNSA/KT00728. See also Soutou’s account, based on the French record of this meeting in the Pompidou papers, in “Le Président Pompidou et les relations entre les Etats-Unis et l’Europe,” pp. 134–135. These remarks were so sensitive that Kissinger was not able to give an accurate account of what he had told Pompidou when he published his memoirs nine years later. Among other things, in introducing the seven-sentence extract from the record of the 18 May meeting that appeared in *Years of Upheaval*, p. 169, he claims he told Pompidou that the United States would “prefer not to have to choose” between the Soviet Union and China, although the document itself does not show him saying anything of the sort, and he deleted the sentence in that passage about “playing China against the Soviet Union.” He obviously did not want to reveal just how anti-Soviet U.S. policy had been in 1973.

viewed as a step toward the neutralization of that area. Pompidou, moreover, did not want a reduction of the U.S. troop presence in Europe.¹³¹ But Kissinger and Nixon, in confidential talks (not just with the French but also with the British and the Chinese), explained what U.S. policy in this area really was. The U.S. government was “using these negotiations on mutual force reductions primarily as a device to keep the Senate from cutting our forces unilaterally.”¹³² MBFR was regarded in Washington “essentially as a means of anticipating the domestic pressure for some reduction of United States troops in Europe and of dealing with that pressure on a basis which would do the minimum of damage to the conventional defence of Europe.”¹³³ At Reykjavik, Nixon told Pompidou that neither of them really wanted an MBFR agreement, but that the talks had an important domestic political function: “I keep dangling this in front of Congress to keep them from cutting funds” for the U.S. troops in Europe.¹³⁴

In the end, none of the explanations and assurances had the desired effect.¹³⁵ In France, the fear of an emerging U.S.-Soviet “condominium” remained very much alive. But even if the French concerns were warranted, there was more than one way to deal with them. One might, for example, have expected the French to press for greater political intimacy with the United States—for deeper forms of cooperation—so that France and the other European countries would not be marginalized. Some key French officials agreed with Kissinger that the U.S.-European relationship needed to be reexamined and that the two sides needed to engage in a serious dialogue.¹³⁶ But Pompidou chose to move in the opposite direction, toward a more Gaullist policy, a policy with a sharper anti-American edge. This choice was probably rooted in a visceral sense that increased self-assertiveness—a greater emphasis on “building Europe” and a greater effort to keep the United

131. See, especially, Soutou, “La problématique de la Détente,” pp. 92–93, 99–100. The Americans were well aware of French feelings in this regard. See Shriver to Secretary of State, 12 December 1969, DOSCF/Subj-Num 1967–69/2103 [POL FR-US 1-1-69]/RG 59/NARA.

132. Kissinger–Huang Hua Meeting, 8 September 1972, p. 4, in DNSA/KT00552.

133. Personal Record of a Discussion [with Kissinger] in the British Embassy, Washington, DC, on 19 April 1973, pp. 7–8, in Sir Burke Trend to Prime Minister, 24 April 1973, in PREM 15/1362, TNAUK; also in DNSA/KT00707.

134. Nixon-Pompidou Meeting, 31 May 1973, p. 10, in DNSA/KT00742. See also Kissinger’s comments in a meeting with French foreign minister Maurice Schumann on 22 September 1972, pp. 7, 9, in NSCF/679/France Vol. X/NPL; also in DNSA/KT00570.

135. See, for example, Jobert’s sharp attack on the PNW agreement in the NATO Council on 10 December 1973. U.S. Embassy London to Department of State, 12 December 1973, in Department of State Central Foreign Policy Files, Electronic Telegrams (1973), RG 59, Doc. No. 1973LONDON14640, NARA, <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/series-list.jsp?cat5WR43>.

136. See, for example, Jean-Bernard Raimond, Note for Pompidou, 10 May 1973, in Soutou, “La problématique de la Détente,” p. 96.

States at arm's length—was the only real answer to the “condominium” problem.¹³⁷

By mid-1973 the shift in French policy was clear. U.S. officials were not slow to react. The U.S. government had earlier taken a relatively conciliatory line on monetary issues, but in mid-August Kissinger told Shultz to “hang tough” in this area. The Europeans, he said, had been “bastards”—he was thinking especially of the Year of Europe affair—and whatever concessions the U.S. government was prepared to make in the monetary field could be made only “as part of a more global negotiation.” Kissinger was unhappy that the French and West German finance ministers were pleased by the way the negotiations on this issue were progressing. The Europeans, as he saw it, were getting a degree of cooperation free of charge, and they should be made to give something in exchange in the political sphere. When Kissinger spoke to Giscard d'Estaing, the French finance minister, he had told him: “You know what you people don't understand is if you made a political concession we could be more generous in the economic field.” Giscard had answered: “Like what? What could you do that Shultz isn't already doing?” The Europeans, Kissinger said, were “trying to build their identity in confrontation with us and they are doing it by picking the areas where it is safe. And sucking us dry in the areas where it isn't and we've just got to put a stop to that.”¹³⁸

The most striking change was in the nuclear area. In the summer of 1973, U.S. assistance to France seemed about to be stepped up. The French armed forces minister, Robert Galley, came to the United States for talks in late July and again in late August.¹³⁹ But by then the U.S. attitude had cooled. “What we want,” Kissinger told Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger on 9 August, “is something which makes Galley drool but doesn't give him anything but something to study for a while.” The goal was to “lead [the French] on without giving up anything,” “to get a handle on them without [their]

137. See in this context some remarks Pompidou made in a cabinet meeting in 1970: “URSS/USA parlent entre eux plus qu'ils nous disent. . . . Ce n'est pas plaisant pour nous. . . . Il faut durcir notre position et se démarquer de tous.” Jobert, Notes of 29 April 1970 Cabinet Meeting, Association Georges Pompidou, Paris, in Césari, “Les relations personnelles,” p. 7.

138. Kissinger-Shultz Telephone Conversation, 15 August 1973, in DNSA/KA10631. The conversation is also in *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Vol. 31, pp. 191–193.

139. Soutou, “La problématique de la Détente,” p. 97. The notes of Galley's meetings with top U.S. officials during this period (27 July and 31 August 1973) make clear that the French government was quite interested in deepening the nuclear relationship. As the French representatives said at the July 27 meeting, “il s'agit donc bien d'échanges d'informations sur la base d'une liste de sujets très classés dans le domaine des missiles et des armes nucléaires.” Balladur Papers, Fonds 543 AP, Box 32, Folder “Etats-Unis,” Archives Nationales, Paris (extract provided by François Dubasque). At about this time, the French were in particular requesting specific information about the locations of Soviet surface-to-air missile sites and medium- and intermediate-range ballistic missile sites. See “French Request for Data on Locations of Soviet Missile Sites,” CIA Director Colby to Kissinger and Schlesinger, 6 August 1974, in CIA/ERR.

knowing it.”¹⁴⁰ What Kissinger was hoping to achieve is not clear. At times he seemed to want to keep a certain nuclear relationship alive—not to “let loose yet” with full cooperation but to do “something moderate” in the nuclear area in order to drive a wedge between France and the other European countries. The policy of “building Europe” was now directed against the United States. Hence, the Nixon administration was “going to try to bust the Europeans”—to “break their unity.” Developing a bilateral nuclear relationship with the French was “essential” if the U.S. government was to achieve that goal. U.S. officials could work with Galley, and then, at some point, Kissinger calculated, the other Europeans would say to the French, “you bastards, you talk about unity and then you go this bilateral route” with the United States.¹⁴¹

Although Kissinger in late 1973 and early 1974 occasionally argued along these lines, the basic thrust of his policy in this area at the time was not that subtle, and his main goal was to get the French to change their basic policy. On 5 September 1973, for example, he told Schlesinger not to “conclude anything with Galley” when the French official came to the United States that month. Kissinger thought he could get something in exchange for the nuclear assistance he was prepared to give France: “The real quid pro quo is the basic orientation of French policy. Galley said he understood but it would take them time.”¹⁴² Pompidou, however, was not going to give way on something

140. Kissinger-Schlesinger Meeting, 9 August 1973, in DMPC:Nixon/FDPL. For the program that was to be presented to Galley on 25 September, see Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger, 24 September 1973, in NSCF/679/France Vol. XI/NPL; and U.S. Defense Department, “Memorandum for the Record,” in Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger, 24 September 1973, in NSCF/679/France Vol. XI/NPL. Limited assistance in the area of warhead design was included here, as well as help with strategic warning. On the warning issue (which was linked to the question of a French option for launch on warning), see especially U.S. Defense Department, Paper Summarizing Foster’s Talks with the French, 24 May 1973 (draft), in Kennedy to Hyland, 27 June 1973, in NSCF/679/France Vol. IX/NPL. The obvious solution here involved tying the French into the U.S. satellite warning system, an arrangement, however, that might have made France more dependent on the United States than it otherwise would have been. But as Kissinger’s comment about “getting a handle” on the French suggests, U.S. officials were not above thinking in such terms. Even if getting influence over France was never the main point of the nuclear assistance program, it was a factor. See, for example, the reference to “opportunities to exert influence” in the Defense Department’s 24 May 1973 document, or the comment about how allowing the French to test at the U.S. underground testing facility in Nevada “could establish a degree of U.S. control or influence over the pace of French nuclear weapons development,” in Defense Department Response to NSSM 175, 11 May 1973, p. 20, in NSCF/679/France Vol. XI/NPL.

141. Kissinger-Schlesinger-Foster Meeting, 17 August 1973, pp. 1–3, in DMPC:Nixon/FDPL; Kissinger-Schlesinger Meeting, 5 December 1973, in DMPC:Nixon/FDPL; and Kissinger-Schlesinger Meeting, 8 January 1974, p. 3, in DMPC:Nixon/FDPL. See also Kissinger’s comment in a 5 September 1973 meeting with Schlesinger: “We want to keep Europe from developing their unity against us. If we keep the French hoping they can get ahead of the British, this would accomplish our objective.” Kissinger-Schlesinger Meeting, 5 September 1973, p. 4, in DMPC:Nixon/FDPL. The notes of Kissinger’s meeting with Galley on 31 August 1973 stored in DMPC:Nixon/FDPL were exempted from declassification in 2008.

142. Kissinger-Schlesinger Meeting, 5 September 1973, p. 1, in DNSA/KT00800. A less-sanitized version is available online in DMPC:Nixon/FDPL.

that basic, and the U.S. government, for its part, was no longer willing to deepen the nuclear relationship with France. “The Americans don’t want to give us anything any more,” Pompidou told Michel Debré in February 1974.¹⁴³ But the nuclear relationship had effectively been put on hold months earlier, in September 1973.¹⁴⁴

The collapse of that relationship thus has to be understood in political terms. The relationship did not end because the United States wanted to learn too much about the French nuclear program. It did not end, that is, because the United States was insisting on terms that would compromise French nuclear independence.¹⁴⁵ The Pompidou government did not feel it had to keep the United States in the dark in this area as a matter of principle. In June 1971, for example, a U.S. delegation had been sent to Paris to work out arrangements for the missile cooperation program. A key U.S. goal was “to obtain a more detailed understanding of French missile programs so that efforts to implement the program of assistance could be initiated.” The French had no problem giving U.S. officials the information they had asked for. In fact, the French were “very forthcoming in the technical discussions. They described their land- and sea-based systems generally in order to place matters in context, and went into greater detail on specific problem areas. They took the U.S. delegation to Bordeaux to tour propulsion fabrication and missile assembly facilities. Actual missiles were examined at close hand.”¹⁴⁶ Another document referred to the “frank manner in which [French Defense Minister] Debré has provided [General Vernon] Walters [the U.S. representative in the

143. Michel Debré, *Entretiens avec Georges Pompidou 1971–1974* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996), p. 210. See also Soutou, “La problématique de la Détente,” pp. 97–98; and Mélandri, “Aux origines de la coopération nucléaire franco-américaine,” p. 252. The U.S. evidence also suggests that the relationship was suspended in late 1973. See Kissinger-Schlesinger Meeting, 5 December 1973, p. 4, in DMPC:Nixon/FDPL. However, according to Pompidou’s successor, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, a nuclear relationship (as Mélandri notes) still existed when he took over as president. Giscard alluded specifically to a breakfast meeting he had with Kissinger on 5 July 1974 in which the secretary of state asked him whether he wanted the relationship to continue. See Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, *Le pouvoir et la vie*, Vol. 2, *L’affrontement* (Paris: Cie. 12, 1991), pp. 186–191. (The DNSA’s Kissinger Transcripts collection contains no record of the meeting.) Perhaps the relationship had not been completely suspended, or perhaps Giscard had misunderstood or misremembered what Kissinger said. But even if certain contacts continued, the important point is that the relationship had cooled significantly.

144. This sort of thing had happened twice before, first at the end of the Eisenhower administration in August 1960 and then under Kennedy in December 1962–January 1963. For an account of those episodes, see Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945–1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 228–229, 365–369. Richard Ullman, in a well-known 1981 article based on interviews, said that the cooperation program *began* shortly after Galley’s September 1973 trip to Washington. See Richard Ullman, “The Covert French Connection,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 75 (Summer 1989), p. 11.

145. For a different view, see Mélandri, “Aux origines de la coopération nucléaire franco-américaine,” pp. 250–251; and Soutou, “La problématique de la Détente,” pp. 90–91, 97–98.

146. Laird to Kissinger, 29 July 1971, in DNSA/PR00608.

talks with the French on Soviet antiballistic missiles] with information concerning French military developments.”¹⁴⁷

Even in the area of what Soutou calls the “software”¹⁴⁸—that is, the basic thinking and planning about how nuclear weapons would actually be used—the French government was more willing to work with the United States than one might have thought. Pompidou (unlike de Gaulle in the mid-1960s) took the Soviet threat seriously. Other key French officials were also worried about what the Soviet Union was up to. The USSR was clearly increasing its military power. General François Maurin, the armed forces chief of staff, thought the whole point of the Soviet buildup was to support a “policy of expansion aimed at dominating western Europe.”¹⁴⁹ The defense of Europe, as the French now saw it, depended on a strong U.S. military presence. But there was a danger that U.S. troop levels would be reduced, and an even greater danger that U.S. strategic forces might be “decoupled” from the defense of Europe.¹⁵⁰ The great fear was that the United States and the Soviet Union were moving toward a tacit understanding that no matter what happened in Europe neither the U.S. nor the Soviet homeland would be subject to nuclear attack. But whether that would be possible turned, in large measure, on how a European war would be fought and, in particular, on how and when nuclear weapons would be used in such a war. Perhaps, French officials were now coming to believe that the old strategy of simply threatening massive retaliation was no longer viable. Perhaps nuclear weapons, if they were used at all, needed to be used in a more discriminate way, first in the theater and then beyond; perhaps a more subtle strategy of controlled escalation was now in order.¹⁵¹ But because the United States was bound to play a fundamental role in

147. Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger, 7 September 1972, in HAK OF/24/HAK's Germany, Moscow, London, Paris Trip 9/72, Misc. Cables and Documents/NPL.

148. Soutou, “La problématique de la Détente,” p. 90.

149. General Maurin (Chief of Staff of French armed forces) Meeting with Ambassador Irwin, 15 November 1973 (dated 16 November 1973), in Department of State Central Foreign Policy Files, Electronic Telegrams (1973), RG 59, Doc. No. 1973PARIS29551, NARA (hereinafter referred to as DOSCFPF/Telegrams(1973)/1973PARIS—, with appropriate document number).

150. Irwin to Kissinger and Schlesinger, 6 October 1973, in DOSCFPF/Telegrams(1973)/1973PARIS26207. (The telegram reports the views of Galley's diplomatic advisor, Seillière.) The French fears were by no means baseless. See the discussion in Marc Trachtenberg, “The Structure of Great Power Politics, 1963–1975,” esp. pp. 8–10, [http://www.polisci.ucla.edu/faculty/trachtenberg/cv/chcw\(long\).doc](http://www.polisci.ucla.edu/faculty/trachtenberg/cv/chcw(long).doc). This is a fully footnoted and somewhat more extensive version of a paper published in Melvyn Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, 3 vols. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Vol. 2, ch. 23.

151. Irwin to Kissinger, 16 November 1973, in DOSCFPF/Telegrams(1973)/1973PARIS29553. The telegram reports a conversation between Seymour Weiss, an important State Department official involved in nuclear issues, and Jacques Martin, deputy secretary general of the French Secrétariat Général de la Défense Nationale. The French official outlined his government's thinking in this area in some detail. Ambassador Irwin commented that Martin's exposition was “one of the most detailed and authoritative we have received.” On French nuclear strategy in the 1960s, see, especially, Charles de

this area, it made sense to try to work closely with them on these matters—to try to think through with them all of the problems relating to the use of nuclear weapons, especially tactical nuclear weapons, in a European war.

Galley made clear that the French government was prepared to discuss these issues. He met with the U.S. ambassador on 21 September. Galley was about to fly to Washington and wanted to let U.S. officials know what he wanted to talk about. Coordinating policy on tactical nuclear weapons was one of the top items on his agenda. “Nothing can be done seriously,” he said,

in France or Europe in the area of security without extensive discussions with the U.S. Secretary of Defense Schlesinger. As an example of his last point, Minister Galley noted that the French Air Force had received tactical nuclear bombs some time ago and that the French Army was scheduled to receive the Pluton tactical nuclear missile system in May 1974. These developments require that the U.S. and France discuss the new situation because France now finds itself, like the NATO forces, with a broad tactical nuclear capability.¹⁵²

Galley made the same point a few days later in a meeting in Washington with Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Rush and another important State Department official, Leon Sloss, who specialized in politico-military affairs. Further talks between French and U.S. military officers, Galley thought, would be “extremely useful. The French were beginning to develop a serious tactical nuclear force. There would soon be a certain number of tactical nuclear weapons for French fighter aircraft and for the French ground forces. This introduction posed problems of cooperation that have to be discussed frankly.”¹⁵³ A couple of weeks later, Galley’s diplomatic adviser Ernest-Antoine Seillière brought up the issue in a meeting with a U.S. official:

Seillière volunteered that the French High Council of National Defense (nearest French equivalent to the NSC, and normally chaired by the President) is addressing the question of France’s future doctrine regarding tactical nuclear weapons. A decision should be reached “in several weeks.” Once France has established its tactical nuclear policy, Seillière thought they would be in a position to examine the question of discussing with the U.S. the problems of cooperation posed by these weapons.¹⁵⁴

Gaule, “Défense atomique de l’Europe,” 1 May 1963, in Couve de Murville Papers, Box CM8, Centre d’Histoire, Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Paris. De Gaulle’s note is discussed in Jeffrey Vanke, “De Gaulle’s Atomic Defence Policy in 1963,” *Cold War History*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (January 2001), pp. 47–65.

152. Irwin to Kissinger, Rush, and Schlesinger, 21 September 1973, in DOSCFPF/Telegrams(1973)/1973PARIS24957.

153. Rush-Galley Conversation, 25 September 1973 (dated Sept. 26), in DOSCFPF/Telegrams(1973)/1973STATE191313.

154. Irwin to Kissinger, 8 October 1973, in DOSCFPF/Telegrams(1973)/1973PARIS26222. The

Because Galley, as Kosciusko-Morizet told Kissinger, was widely seen as Pompidou's man, it is safe to infer that the president himself was behind the nuclear policy.¹⁵⁵

The French government was prepared at this point to work closely with the United States in the nuclear area. French officials were willing to discuss fundamental strategic issues—"software" issues—with their U.S. counterparts. They were even apparently willing to work out a common strategy for the nuclear defense of Europe. But the nuclear relationship, important as it was, could not exist in a vacuum. As political relations deteriorated, a strong defense relationship could scarcely be sustained. The problem, as a U.S. diplomat in Paris put it at the time, was that the French government "regards us as a partner in defense only, while in all other matters the E.C. and the U.S. are to interact as separate, independent entities."¹⁵⁶ But the U.S. government was simply unwilling to accept an arrangement of that sort.

By September 1973 the nuclear relationship had been put on hold. The date of the suspension is significant because it indicates that political relations had taken a sharp turn for the worse even before war broke out in the Middle East the following month.

The Mideast War and Its Aftermath

In October 1973, war broke out between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The United States supported Israel (within limits), and the Soviet Union supported the Arabs, at one point threatening to intervene unilaterally—a threat that led directly to the famous U.S. nuclear alert of 24 October. If a nuclear war broke out, NATO Europe could not stand on the sidelines, but the U.S.

NATO commander, General Andrew Goodpaster, also wanted to move ahead in this area. The question of tactical nuclear weapons, he told Nixon, had "been stagnant for 10 years. He [Goodpaster] feels we are now at the point where we have done enough preparatory work that we can begin to take a new position on this troublesome issue. Goodpaster also noted that he was trying to extend the areas of cooperation with the French and he felt the French military were very much in favor of closer cooperation." See Nixon-Goodpaster Meeting, February 15, 1973, in DMPC:Nixon/FDPL. The Defense Department more generally was very much in favor of closer cooperation in this area and had been disappointed by French defense minister Debré's reluctance to pursue this issue when he met with his American counterpart in July 1972. See Laird to Nixon, 5 July 1972, in NSC Files, Box 678, France Vol. IX, NPL; Talking Points Memo, p. 4, in Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger, 5 July 1972, in NSC Files, Box 678, France Vol. IX, NPL; and, especially, Defense Department Response to NSSM 175, 11 May 1973, pp. 7, 30, in NSC Files, Box 679, France Vol. XI, NPL.

155. Kissinger-Kosciusko-Morizet Meeting, 13 April 1973, p. 8, in DNSA/KT00702. Pompidou himself told German chancellor Brandt in June 1973 that the French and the Americans needed to discuss the TNW issue. Brandt-Pompidou Meeting, 21 June 1973, in AAPD 1973, p. 1026.

156. Stone to Stoessel, 29 November 1973, DOSCFPF/Telegrams(1973)/1973PARIS30642.

government had not consulted with its allies before ordering the alert.¹⁵⁷ And the Europeans did not agree with the United States on the Arab-Israeli issue. They generally took a more pro-Arab line, in large part, as they themselves freely admitted, because of their much greater dependence on Arab oil¹⁵⁸—and the Arabs were now openly using oil as a political weapon.

As the war ran its course, the Europeans by and large sought to distance themselves from the United States. They objected to U.S. efforts to resupply Israel from U.S. stocks in Europe. They refused to permit U.S. transport planes to overfly their territory—even though the Soviet Union (as Kissinger notes) was allowed to use NATO airspace “without challenge.”¹⁵⁹ It was not just the French that dissociated themselves from the United States in that way. The West German government, for example, publicly announced that weapons deliveries from U.S. depots in the FRG “cannot be allowed.”¹⁶⁰

The Europeans had their own grievances. They complained, above all, about inadequate consultation, but “the real trouble,” as Kissinger later pointed out, “was a clash in political perspectives that no amount of consultation” would have been able to remove.¹⁶¹ He also felt that the complaint was somewhat disingenuous. The United States, as he told the West German ambassador on 26 October, had in the past repeatedly tried to consult with the allies and “work out common positions,” but the Europeans had not been interested. On the Arab-Israeli question in particular, they had chosen to dissociate themselves from the United States and pursue policies of their own. In

157. The French were perhaps a bit more understanding about the lack of consultation on the alert than one might have expected. Kosciusko-Morizet, for example, in a frank exchange with a key State Department official on the general issue of consultations on 27 November, said that “France understood [the] need for quick action in calling [the] alert under the circumstances and he felt French had no complaints on that score.” Galley told the U.S. ambassador on 30 October that he felt the “US government was right to go on alert in order to keep Soviet paratroopers from inserting themselves along the Suez Canal” and that the unilateral U.S. action was in line with de Gaulle’s view that the use of U.S. forces would be determined by the United States itself, adding, “We French do not object. You are playing your role exactly as we expected. You are Americans first and that is right.” On Pompidou’s orders, the French put their own forces in West Germany on alert and allowed allied warplanes to pass through French airspace. Kissinger to U.S. Embassy Paris, 30 November 1973, in *Richard M. Nixon National Security Files, 1969–1974*, Western Europe Series (Bethesda, MD: Lexis/Nexis, 2005), Microfilm, Reel 10; and Irwin to Kissinger, 31 October 1973, in *Richard M. Nixon National Security Files*, Reel 10. The original documents are in NSCF/679/France Vol. XI (2 of 2)/NPL. See also, General Alain de Boissieu’s account in *Georges Pompidou hier et aujourd’hui: Témoignages* (Neuilly, France: Editions Breet, 1990), p. 221.

158. See, for example, Pompidou’s comments to Kissinger in Pompidou-Kissinger Meeting, 20 December 1973, p. 7, in DNSA/KT00968. For a recent overview of French policy during the crisis, see Pauline Peretz, “La France et la Guerre du Kippour,” *Revue d’histoire diplomatique*, No. 2 (2006), pp. 12–25.

159. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 709.

160. *Ibid.*, p. 714. On British policy during the crisis, see Matthew Ferraro, “Tough Going”: *Anglo-American Relations and the Yom Kippur War of 1973* (New York: iUniverse, 2007).

161. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 720.

such circumstances, he said, “when their fundamental attitude was either slightly or openly hostile,” they were hardly in a position to “insist on a right to private briefings.”¹⁶²

Kissinger—who by now was firmly in charge of U.S. policy (power had shifted to him in large part because of the Watergate affair)—did not dismiss the Europeans’ case out of hand. He realized they could make a serious argument that the United States had been too passive before the war, that the U.S. government needed to force the Israelis to withdraw from the areas they had occupied in 1967, and that a comprehensive peace had to be the goal. But the U.S. view was different: Even a full Israeli withdrawal would not necessarily lead to peace; tilting toward the Arab side and giving way to Arab oil power would merely strengthen the radicals within the Arab camp; a comprehensive peace was unachievable in the near future, and a more modest step-by-step approach was in order.¹⁶³

The Nixon administration had a strategy. The key thing was to capitalize on Israeli dependence on the United States. This would compel the Arabs to deal with the United States because only the U.S. government could influence Israeli policy. Kissinger hoped to take advantage of that position to build a relationship with the Arab moderates and to marginalize the radicals within the Arab world (and their Soviet supporters). To do that, the United States would have to show that moderation paid off and that bit by bit a reasonable accommodation could be worked out. As the Arabs moved toward a reasonable policy, the Israelis would also become more accommodating—or could more easily be pushed in that direction. The hope was that with this sort of strategy a settlement of the nearly intractable conflict might eventually be worked out.

The Europeans saw things differently, but in Kissinger’s view the issue was no longer who could make the better case. Even if the Europeans had been right about U.S. policy before the war, it made little sense for them to try to sabotage U.S. policy now. They had no viable alternative strategy that they were capable of pursuing. To undercut what the U.S. government was doing—to encourage the Arab radicals, to give them the sense that they, and not the United States, were in the driver’s seat—could not, in Kissinger’s view, be in the interest of the West as a whole.¹⁶⁴

Indeed one would not have expected the Europeans, especially the French, to have opposed the United States as strongly as they did on this matter. On the core issue the two sides were not that far apart. All the major Eu-

162. Kissinger–von Staden Meeting, 26 October 1973 (dated 27 October 1973), pp. 4, 6, in NSAEBB98/81. The German account of this meeting, which has Kissinger taking a somewhat softer line, is in AAPD 1973, No. 341 p. 1665.

163. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, pp. 707–708.

164. *Ibid.*, pp. 707–708, 711, 716.

European countries were committed to the survival of Israel, and the United States did not intend to give the Israelis a blank check. As Kissinger told Pompidou in December 1973, the Israelis had “a diplomacy which leads to suicide.”¹⁶⁵ The implication was that basic Israeli policy had to change, a point on which Kissinger and Pompidou agreed. The argument was thus over strategy, not fundamentals. In such circumstances one might have thought that given the basic realities of the situation the Europeans would not try to sabotage U.S. policy.

And yet that, as Kissinger saw it, was precisely what they were trying to do. “Europe, it emerged increasingly,” he said, “wanted the option to conduct a policy separate from the United States and in the case of the Middle East objectively in conflict with us.”¹⁶⁶ This was something the U.S. government could not accept. Did the Europeans really think they could pursue a totally independent and indeed anti-American policy and still expect the United States to defend them? Did anyone really think that “America should be accorded the great privilege of defending Europe, but have no other role” in European affairs?¹⁶⁷ To his mind, and to Nixon’s as well, the European view (as the West German ambassador expressed it in a meeting with Kissinger) that it was wrong to link “the Near East issue to broader alliance questions,” and that “these matters should be kept separate,” was absurd.¹⁶⁸ Kissinger was intent on making clear to the main European governments that the line they were taking on the Arab-Israeli question was putting their alliance with the United States at risk and that there were “limits to our store of good will.” The Europeans would have to “recognize the abyss before which they stand.”¹⁶⁹ The Europeans, he told the French ambassador on 26 October, had behaved in the crisis “not as friends but as hostile powers.” The U.S. government was going to reassess its relationship with the NATO allies in the light of their behavior on the Midest question.¹⁷⁰ Kissinger thus took actions designed to give the al-

165. Kissinger-Pompidou Meeting, 20 December 1973, p. 4, in DNSA/KT00968. Kissinger was convinced, he told the British that same month, “that Israel would have to withdraw from the occupied territories.” See Record of 13 December 1973, Cabinet Meeting, CM(73)61st, in CAB 128/53, TNAUK.

166. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 716. For Kissinger’s views at the time, see Secretary’s Staff Meeting, 20 November 1973 (dated 21 November 1973), esp. pp. 13–21, in DNSA/KT00914.

167. Kissinger-Kosciusko-Morizet Meeting, 3 December 1973, p. 2, in DNSA/KT00932. See also Kissinger’s remarks to the NATO Council, 4 March 1974, in AAPD 1974, pp. 309, 314.

168. Kissinger-von Staden Meeting, 26 October 1973 (dated 27 October 1973), p. 4, in NSAEBB98/81; and Secretary’s Staff Meeting, 23 October 23, 1973, pp. 7–8, in NSAEBB98/63. For Nixon’s view, see his public comment of 15 March 1974, in Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 932.

169. Kissinger Meeting with Rusk, Bundy, McCloy et al., 28 November 1973, pp. 29, 31, in DNSA/KT00928.

170. Kissinger-Kosciusko-Morizet Meeting, 25 October 1973 (dated 26 October 1973), pp. 2–3, in NSAEBB98/75; and Kissinger’s remarks in Secretary’s Staff Meeting, 23 October 1973, pp. 7–8, in

lies the impression that the U.S. commitment to Europe was weakening. He instructed U.S. officials, for example, to stop “the compulsory reassuring of the Europeans on a nuclear guarantee.”¹⁷¹ He also made clear that he was no longer interested in the Year of Europe declarations. “They have been drained of any significance,” he told the French ambassador on 3 December. Kissinger was washing his hands of the entire affair.¹⁷²

The problem, Kissinger was coming to think, could no longer be swept under the rug. The United States needed to have it out with the European allies. It was “morally disgraceful” for the Europeans to be “beholden to the Arabs.”¹⁷³ The Europeans were “craven”; they were appeasers. When one saw the intelligence reports “of what the U.K. and the French are saying to the Arabs, it is worse than it was in the thirties.”¹⁷⁴ “We are aware of French approaches in Arab capitals,” he told the French ambassador on 3 December, “and our reports suggest that your position has been critical of the United States. I see no reason under these conditions for a cooperative relationship.”¹⁷⁵ He made much the same point two months later in a telephone conversation with John McCloy: “I cannot tell you on the phone” (presumably because this information came from intelligence sources), but the French were “pursuing a more active anti-US policy in the Middle East than the Russians.”¹⁷⁶ A month later, Kissinger made the same point in a talk with the West German foreign minister: “And let’s not forget what the French are saying in the Middle East as they talk against our policies. If [Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei] Gromyko had said such things we would say it was the end of détente.”¹⁷⁷

NSAEBB98/63. See also Ferraro, “*Tough Going*,” pp. 82–83, 103; Kissinger–von Staden Meeting, 26 October 1973 (dated 27 October 1973), p. 1, in NSAEBB98/81; and, especially, Notes from 25 October 1973 Secretary’s Staff Meeting, 29 October 1973, pp. 21–24, in DNSA/KT00869.

171. Kissinger, in Secretary of State’s Staff Meeting, 27 November 1973, pp. 1, 16, in DNSA/KT00927.

172. Kissinger–Kosciusko-Morizet Meeting, 3 December 1973, pp. 7–8, in DNSA/KT00932. See also Notes from 25 October 1973 Secretary’s Staff Meeting, 29 October 1973, in DNSA/KT00869, pp. 21–22, in Helmut Sonnenfeldt Papers [NARA Entry No. 5339]/4/HS Chron—Official—Jan–Apr 1974/RG 59/NARA; and Kissinger Meeting with Key Advisors, 11 March 1974, p. 5, in Helmut Sonnenfeldt Papers [NARA Entry No. 5339]/4/HS Chron—Official—Jan–Apr 1974/RG 59/NARA.

173. Kissinger-Jobert Meeting, 19 December 1973, p. 5, in DOSCF/Subj-Num 1970–73/2278 [POL FR-US 1-10-73]/RG 59/NARA.

174. Kissinger Meeting with Rusk, Bundy, McCloy et al., 28 November 1973, p. 23, in DNSA/KT00928; and C. L. Sulzberger, “United States and France: I,” *The New York Times*, 16 March 1974, p. 31.

175. Kissinger–Kosciusko-Morizet Meeting, 3 December 1973, p. 3, in DNSA/KT00932.

176. Kissinger Telephone Conversation with John McCloy, 8 February 1974, 11:10 A.M., in U.S. Department of State Electronic Reading Room, Kissinger Transcripts Series (DOS ERR/KT).

177. Kissinger-Scheel Meeting, 3 March 1974, p. 8, in DNSA/KT01052. See also the discussion in Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 904; and Kissinger-Rush Telephone Conversation, March 30, 1974, in DNSA/KA12252.

The issue, in Kissinger's view, could not be allowed to fester. He was increasingly inclined to "bring matters to a head" with the Europeans, especially with the French.¹⁷⁸ In January 1974 the main oil importing countries were invited to a conference in Washington. The goal was to organize the oil purchasers, but the Europeans did not like the idea of a consumers' cartel. They were afraid that the oil producers, who of course had an active cartel-like organization of their own, would find the notion provocative. The French were particularly hostile to the plan. But the U.S. government wanted a show-down. If the plan for energy cooperation did not work, Kissinger told McCloy, the United States would "have to take on the French in an all-out confrontation"; "I have reached the point, Jack, where I believe we have to take the French on."¹⁷⁹

As it turned out, the French were isolated in Washington. The other main consumer countries succumbed to U.S. pressure and supported the U.S. proposal to set up an international energy agency.¹⁸⁰ But the U.S. victory did not settle the issue. A month later a new confrontation occurred. The United States had long wanted to make sure that the EC did not take action on the Arab-Israeli question that would undermine U.S. policy. To that end, Kissinger thought the EC should consult with the U.S. government before it made any major move on that issue.¹⁸¹ In early March, the EC met in Brussels and adopted a plan for a European-Arab dialogue, to culminate in a foreign ministers' meeting—a move taken without consultation with the United States and indeed after assurances had been given (by West German Foreign Minister Walter Scheel) that the "dialogue" would be a more low-key affair.¹⁸² As Kissinger later noted, Scheel (then speaking for the EC) could not have been under the illusion that the U.S. government would be pleased by the EC's decision.¹⁸³

178. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 901.

179. Kissinger Phone Conversation with John McCloy, 8 February 1974, 11:10 A.M., in DOS ERR/KT; and Kissinger Phone Conversation with John McCloy, 8 February 1974, 9:40 P.M., in DOS ERR/KT.

180. As Kissinger later noted, he had told the German foreign minister that rather than be "party to a confusing outcome in which rhetoric obscured failure," the U.S. government "would rather announce disagreement and draw the political consequences—a thinly veiled threat that this time intransigence would not be free." Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 907. For an interesting discussion of U.S. tactics at the conference, see Kissinger-Sonnenfeldt Telephone Conversation, 8 February 1974, in DNSA/KA11995.

181. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, pp. 899–900.

182. See Kissinger-Scheel Meeting, 3 March 1974, p. 7, in DNSA/KT01052. Kissinger had explicitly warned Scheel against the idea of a "Foreign Ministers' meeting with the Arabs," which, he thought, would be a "catastrophe" (p. 6).

183. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 930.

Kissinger, in fact, was livid. “We were determined to draw the line,” he later wrote. What had happened was unacceptable. “We now had divergent policies in areas we considered vital.”¹⁸⁴ He had warned Scheel on March 3 about what was at stake. “The Saturday before the Energy Conference,” he told him, “I had a long discussion with the President and for the first time we discussed seriously the possibility of unilateral US troop withdrawal. If Europe pursues this policy toward opposition—if Europe is going to move toward neutralism anyway—we may as well make our decisions unilaterally as well.”¹⁸⁵ He wanted U.S. representatives in the field to be told that the administration intended to take a hard line with the allies: “I want to get it into the system so that our God damned embassies understand that we are deadly serious about this and they are not running a psychiatric social service for distraught Europeans.”¹⁸⁶ The United States, he wrote Scheel shortly after the Brussels decision was announced, would now also feel free to take steps that it considered to be in its own national interest and “to report on them to the Community thereafter”—and the United States, in his view, was much better able to pursue that sort of policy than the Europeans were.¹⁸⁷ As he had warned Scheel on 3 March: “If we had wanted to be predominant, we wouldn’t consult on such areas as the Middle East but instead we would allow our foreign policy to float. We could achieve domination because of our greater weight.”¹⁸⁸

The issue of the “dialogue” was not in itself of enormous importance, but Kissinger was trying to make a point. He was using this occasion to make clear to the Europeans that taking action without consulting with the United States in an area in which U.S. interests were affected in a major way “will never be accepted again.”¹⁸⁹ By the end of the month he thought his point had gotten through. “I think now,” he told McGeorge Bundy on 23 March, “no

184. *Ibid.*, pp. 930–931.

185. See Kissinger-Scheel Meeting, 3 March 1974, p. 17, in DNSA/KT01052.

186. Kissinger Meeting with Key Advisors, 18 March 1974, pp. 3, 5–6, in DNSA/KT01073.

187. See Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, pp. 901–902, 930.

188. Kissinger-Scheel Meeting, 3 March 1974, pp. 3–4, 14, in DNSA/KT01052.

189. Kissinger-Sonnenfeldt Telephone Conversation, 5 March 1974, in DOS ERR/KT. Note also the line he took in a meeting on 11 March 1974 with Sonnenfeldt and other key State Department officials: “The question is what would be the greatest shock to the Europeans?” (p. 5); “They keep saying that if they are forced to choose between France and the US, they will choose the US. Well, maybe we should give them the choice now” (p. 6); “We have never gone for the jugular. Maybe it is time to do it” (p. 7); “I am tired of a crisis with them every six months. Maybe we should push them to the wall” (p. 8); “if we don’t” reaffirm the alliance, “we scare the hell out of them and they show extreme caution before another initiative without consultation” (p. 10); and so on. See Kissinger Meeting with Key Advisers, 11 March 1974, in Sonnenfeldt Papers/4/H5 Chron—Official—Jan–Apr 1974/RG 59/ NARA.

European government is going to vote on something that affects our interest without getting it to us one way or another.”¹⁹⁰ France was the main target. “French policy,” Kissinger told his advisers, “is not only obstructionist, but antagonistic: in Syria, and other places as well. They are organically hostile to the US and now clearly constitute the greatest global opposition to US foreign policy.”¹⁹¹ The French were trying to get Europe as a whole to back their policy. In formulating a separate Mideast policy, Europe would in Jobert’s view (as perceived by Kissinger) be issuing “a sort of declaration of independence from the United States.”¹⁹² For Kissinger, as he told Scheel on March 3, it was “intolerable to us that the only way Europe seems to be able to establish its identity is in opposition to the US.”¹⁹³ Nor did Kissinger conceal these views from the French. In a meeting with Kosciusko-Morizet in late March, just a few days before Pompidou’s death, he laid out his grievances in considerable detail. The bottom line was simple: “The Alliance is basic to our policy but the American defense of Europe cannot continue so that Europe is free to pursue anti-American policies.”¹⁹⁴

By that point, French policy had also hardened. The dying president laid out his views in an important document, his “strategic testament” of 1 Febru-

190. Kissinger-Bundy Telephone Conversation, 23 March 1974, in DOS ERR/KT. A week earlier he had told his staff, “I want our embassies to understand that this is a damned serious process, that we are winning—that in fact we have won because the Europeans have no guts for a real fight. In fact, when I consider how much they screamed when we asked for cooperation and how quiet they are when we are kicking them around, it really makes me wonder.” Kissinger Meeting with Key Advisers, 18 March 1974, p. 3, in DNSA/KT01073. The Europeans do seem essentially to have given way. See Werner Link, “Aussen- und Deutschlandpolitik in der Ära Brandt 1969–1974,” in Karl Dietrich Bracher, Wolfgang Jäger, and Werner Link, eds., *Republik im Wandel 1969–1974: Die Ära Brandt* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1986), pp. 260–266, esp. p. 265. The more recent scholarship takes much the same line. Note, especially, the interpretation of the Gymnich agreement of 21 April 1974 (ultimately reflected in a “gentleman’s agreement” of 10 June 1974), which Link views as fundamental in this context. “The Gymnich agreement,” Gfeller writes, “and its enshrinement in a non-paper practically ensured that EC states would no longer bear a joint influence on world events in any way that could antagonize the US.” Gfeller, “Re-envisioning Europe,” p. 280. See also Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War*, pp. 3, 316–322.

191. Kissinger Meeting with Key Advisors, 11 March 1974, p. 4, in Sonnenfeldt Papers/4/H5 Chron—Official—Jan–Apr 1974/RG 59/NARA.

192. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 926.

193. Kissinger-Scheel Meeting, 3 March 1974, p. 4, in DNSA/KT01052.

194. Kissinger–Kosciusko-Morizet Meeting, 22 March 1974, p. 10, in DNSA/KT01080. On these matters, see also “La grande colère de M. Kissinger,” Kosciusko-Morizet to Jobert, 7 March 1974, in Balladur Papers (543 AP), Box 32, Folder “Correspondance J. Kosciusko-Morizet, ambassadeur de France aux Etats-Unis, à M. Jobert, ministre des Affaires étrangères (classée secret),” Archives Nationales, Paris (provided by François Dubasque). This long report is based on notes of Kissinger’s (taped) remarks to U.S. journalists during his recent trips to Europe and the Middle East. See also Kissinger’s comments during the March 1974 meeting of the North Atlantic Council and, especially, his threat to “break” France if that country continued its obstructionist policy. Maurice Vaisse, *La puissance ou l’influence? La France dans le monde depuis 1958* (Paris: Fayard, 2009), p. 194. Vaisse draws the quotation from the unpublished memoirs of Paul Carraud, the diplomat representing France at the council meeting.

ary 1974. “When our core interests are at stake,” Pompidou wrote, “we must never give way or pull back. Being isolated does not matter, threats and pressures do not matter, France must never give in to anyone, even the most powerful. When the national interest is at stake, it is necessary to display an iron will.”¹⁹⁵ The time had come, in other words, to stand up to the United States—to return to a purer, more orthodox, Gaullist political line. On 1 February, the very day Pompidou signed the testament, he showed a copy of the document to the arch-Gaullist Michel Debré: “Vous voyez, Michel, je ne trahis pas la France!”¹⁹⁶

Making Sense of the Story

So, by the end of the Nixon-Pompidou period the relationship that had begun so promisingly in 1969 was in tatters. Kissinger was baffled by what had happened after mid-1973.¹⁹⁷ “What,” he wondered, “have we done to these people?”¹⁹⁸ From his point of view, he and Nixon had from the start practically bent over backward to build a strong relationship with France. They had “always believed,” he told the French ambassador on 22 March 1974, “that Europe must be organized around France.” “The confrontation which has come about,” he said, was “certainly not by our choice.” “The French,” he said, were “the aggressors in this situation.”¹⁹⁹

What had gone wrong? The two countries had an obvious interest in cooperating with each other. Why, then, was cooperation so hard for them? In Pierre Mélandri’s view, the answer is simple: The basic policies of the two countries were essentially “incompatible.” The French sought to develop a distinct European identity, whereas the United States was out to reaffirm “Atlantic solidarity” and its own “leadership” within the Atlantic alliance.²⁰⁰

195. The quotation is from Jean de Lipkowski, “Succéder au général,” in Bernard Pons et al., eds., *Georges Pompidou: Vingt ans après* (Paris: Table Ronde, 1994), pp. 114–115, which quotes extracts of Pompidou’s testament. For a discussion, see Soutou, “La problématique de la Détente,” esp. pp. 105–107; and Georges-Henri Soutou, “Georges Pompidou et Valéry Giscard d’Estaing: Deux réconciliations et deux ruptures avec les États-Unis,” *Relations Internationales*, No. 119 (Fall 2004), pp. 311–312.

196. Debré, *Entretiens avec Georges Pompidou*, p. 209.

197. Kissinger-Sauvagnargues Meeting, 4 July 1974, in DNSA/KT01240. His perplexity comes out in many documents from the period. Note, for example, a comment he made in a meeting with the French ambassador at the end of 1973: “We are rapidly approaching in our bilateral relations the conditions of 1962 and this in an administration more francophile than any could conceivably imagine.” See Kissinger-Kosciusko-Morizet Meeting, 3 December 1973, in DNSA/KT00932.

198. Nixon-Kissinger Telephone Conversation, 11 February 1974, 6:30 P.M., in DOS ERR/KT.

199. Kissinger-Kosciusko-Morizet Meeting, 22 March 1974, pp. 8, 14, in DNSA/KT01080.

200. Mélandri, “Une relation très spéciale,” p. 124.

Georges-Henri Soutou's interpretation is somewhat different. The U.S. government, as he sees it, did not really want Europe (and Japan) to play a more independent role in world affairs. In the world of Nixon and Kissinger, he says, only three powers—the United States, China, and the Soviet Union—really mattered. Everything else—all the talk about the allies playing an important role—was essentially just window-dressing.²⁰¹ But the French could scarcely accept being marginalized in that way. French fears about where the détente policy was leading—the fear of an emerging U.S.-Soviet “condominium”—meant, Soutou argues, that the relationship with the United States could go only so far.²⁰² When tested, Pompidou's basic Gaullist instincts were practically bound to reassert themselves.

What is to be made of these arguments? First, the idea that Pompidou's fundamental goal was to build a Europe with a political personality of its own is a bit overdrawn. He certainly wanted Europe to develop a greater degree of political cohesion and independence, but his basic inclination was to proceed slowly and carefully and without putting what he saw as Europe's vital security relationship with America at risk.²⁰³ And too “European” a policy was distasteful for another reason: a policy of “building Europe” might give West Germany too much power. In large part for that reason Pompidou had not been eager to move ahead toward an autonomous European defense structure or even toward a European monetary union.²⁰⁴

Indeed, for all the talk about “building Europe,” the French were much more interested even at this point in working with the United States on defense issues than with the FRG. According to a high French official, the West

201. Georges-Henri Soutou, *La guerre de cinquante ans: Le conflit Est-Ouest 1943–1990* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), pp. 524–525.

202. Soutou, “La problématique de la Détente,” esp. p. 92.

203. See Roussel, *Pompidou*, pp. 486, 496, 650. On the importance of the security relationship with the United States, see a comment Pompidou made in a 21 May 1973 meeting with Heath (p. 549): “Nos relations avec les Etats-Unis sont, en réalité, dominées par un fait: la défense européenne dépend avant tout de la puissance américaine.” See also 5AG2/1015/AN.

204. See Pompidou's comments on the issue of a European defense system in a 19 March 1973 meeting with Heath, in Roussel, *Pompidou*, p. 506; and 5AG2/1015/AN. See also the discussion in Gfeller, “Re-envisioning Europe,” pp. 92–93. “Nous ne sommes nullement pressés de parler défense,” Pompidou noted in August 1972. “Il faut d'abord une base politique à l'Europe et elle est loin d'être en place.” Pompidou, Note on “Grande-Bretagne,” 18 August 1972, 5AG2 1014, quoted in Gfeller, “Re-envisioning Europe,” p. 93 n. 91. The French were not particularly interested in nuclear cooperation with the British, even though such an arrangement would not prejudice France's nuclear relationship with the United States. The U.S. government seemed to favor Anglo-French nuclear cooperation and apparently preferred an arrangement à trois with France and Britain rather than separate bilateral relationships—but the French dismissed the idea out of hand. See Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War*, pp. 85–91, 213–219, 342–346 (Nixon's comments about Anglo-French cooperation are quoted on p. 89); and Vaïsse, “Les ‘relations spéciales’ franco-américaines” (manuscript version—the key passages do not appear in the published version), pp. 23–24, 28. On French policy regarding a European monetary union, see Robert Frank, “Pompidou, le franc et l'Europe,” pp. 349–355, 359.

Germans had indicated they were prepared to work out a “joint defense arrangement” with France “which would include reliance on the French strategic nuclear force. Coupled with this proposal was an offer to make a substantial financial contribution to the further development of the French strategic nuclear forces.” But the French were not interested in anything of the sort. They were determined not to allow the West Germans to share in any way in the control of France’s strategic nuclear forces.²⁰⁵ Whenever the West Germans approached the French about the nuclear issue during this period, the French response was invariably tepid.²⁰⁶ French officials were well aware that their reluctance to allow West Germany to play a major role in the nuclear area meant that there was a limit beyond which the policy of “building Europe” could not go.²⁰⁷ But defense cooperation with the United States was another matter entirely.²⁰⁸ The French government wanted to develop a nuclear relationship with the United States—a policy that remained intact even as political relations deteriorated sharply in mid-1973.

The question of how to organize the defense of Western Europe—and, in particular, the question of how much emphasis to give to “European” as opposed to “Atlantic” structures—was of fundamental importance. Throughout the Cold War the French had to figure out how to strike the right balance between West Germany and the United States. There obviously had to be a

205. Report of comments made by Achille-Fould, the Secretary of State in the Armed Forces Ministry, in Irwin to Kissinger, 14 September 1973, in *Richard M. Nixon National Security Files*, Reel 10. The original document is in NSCF/679/France Vol. XI (2 of 2)/NPL.

206. See Georges-Henri Soutou, “Willy Brandt, Georges Pompidou et l’Ostpolitik,” in Horst Müller and Maurice Vaisse, eds., *Willy Brandt und Frankreich* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005), pp. 147–148; Hans-Peter Schwarz, “Willy Brandt, Georges Pompidou und die Ostpolitik,” in Müller and Vaisse, eds., *Willy Brandt und Frankreich*, pp. 156, 163; and Wilfried Loth, “Willy Brandt, Georges Pompidou und die Spannungspolitik,” in Müller and Vaisse, eds., *Willy Brandt und Frankreich*, pp. 175–179. For Soutou’s discussion of this issue, see Soutou, “L’attitude de Georges Pompidou face à l’Allemagne,” pp. 298–304; and Georges-Henri Soutou, *L’alliance incertaine: Les rapports politico-stratégiques franco-allemands, 1954–1966* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), pp. 339–341. The German record of the key meeting between Brandt and Pompidou was published in AAPD 1973, esp. p. 1024–1025. The record of another important meeting (between Scheel and Jobert on 9 November 1973) at which this issue was discussed is also in AAPD 1973, Doc. No. 367, esp. p. 1794. See also AAPD 1973, Doc. Nos. 274, 390, 393.

207. See, for example, André Bettencourt (Ministre délégué auprès du ministre des Affaires étrangères) Meeting with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Irwin, 23 October 1972, 5AG2/117/AN. “L’une des raisons fondamentales de la faiblesse de l’Europe,” Bettencourt said, “c’est que les Neuf ne peuvent pas élaborer une politique de défense à cause de l’Allemagne.”

208. Even under de Gaulle the French had been interested in seeing whether something could be worked out. On 15 June 1962 the NATO commander’s French liaison officer told him that the French foreign minister would raise the issue of “coordination of US-French nuclear forces” with Secretary of State Rusk. “US-French Nuclear Cooperation,” 18 June 1962, in Richard Neustadt Papers, Box 19, Folder “Government Consulting—Skybolt/NATO/Atlantic Affairs, 2 of 3,” JFKL. The French did bring up the issue in a meeting with Rusk a year later. Rusk-Couve Meeting, 7 April 1963, in DDF 1963, Vol. 1, p. 371. For evidence of French interest in the issue in late 1965, see Kissinger-Grandville Meeting, 23 January 1966, pp. 8–9, in DDRS/CK3100490686.

counterweight to Soviet power in Europe; almost as obviously this counterweight had to be based in large part on U.S. military power. But there also had to be a European counterweight to U.S. power within the Western alliance, and, given the main thrust of British policy during most of this period, that counterweight had to be based on some sort of Franco-German entente. But the French could not tilt too far in that direction: a freestanding Europe would have meant a strong—perhaps too strong—West German state. A decent relationship with the United States would thus provide a degree of insurance, a hedge against the risks of pursuing too “European” a policy. Not every French leader in the Cold War period thought in those terms, but Pompidou basically did, at least until the final year of his presidency when he seemed to take a more “European” line. But he did not take that line because he had suddenly become an “européen acharné” (to use his own term). The shift in policy stemmed from changes in the global political conjuncture—above all, the dramatic improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations and the resulting fears in Europe of a superpower “condominium.”

Did this mean that a confrontation with the United States was unavoidable? Pompidou certainly wanted to do what he could to make sure that the European countries, especially France, were not just U.S. satellites. He did not really share de Gaulle’s view that the only reason the United States was involved in Europe was to prevent that key part of the world from being absorbed into the Soviet sphere. Nor did he go along with de Gaulle’s argument that France could pursue a totally independent policy because any U.S. decision on whether to stay in Europe or withdraw would be determined by America’s own interests and not by anything the French did or did not do.²⁰⁹ Pompidou’s views were not that extreme. For him, Europe’s dependence on the United States was a simple fact of life that had to be taken into account when the Europeans were working out their own policies. But that did not mean that the United States had to be followed blindly. Within broad limits, France had to be able to make choices of its own.

209. Perhaps the most striking example of this attitude was de Gaulle’s justification for his refusal in 1964 to take part in the ceremonies marking the twentieth anniversary of the Normandy landings. The Anglo-Saxons in 1944 were pursuing their own interests; the French thus owed them no debt of gratitude for what they had done: “Les Américains ne se souciait pas plus de délivrer la France que les Russes de libérer la Pologne.” See Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, Vol. 2, 84–87. Jobert saw things much the same way. See, for example, Jobert-Bahr Meeting, 19 November 1973, in AAPD 1973, p. 1862. This basic point about U.S. policy was expressed more elegantly by Maurice Couve de Murville, formerly de Gaulle’s foreign minister, in a number of speeches he gave after leaving office. The United States, he said, was “too great a nation” not to base its policy on a judgment about where its true interests lay. Security for Europe was therefore not a function of the “degree of docility” the Europeans showed toward the United States. See, for example, Maurice Couve de Murville, Speech to the Semaine Européenne de l’Ecole Centrale, 23 January 1974, pp. 4–5, in Maurice Couve de Murville Papers (MCMP), Box CM5, Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Paris; and Maurice Couve de Murville, Speech in Hanover, 11 March 1974, p. 18, in MCMP, Box CM5.

Was that position incompatible with U.S. policy? Kissinger said that the U.S. government wanted a strong Europe—that a “strong Europe [was] as essential as a strong China”—and that the only thing the United States objected to was the “attempt to organize Europe, to unify Europe, on an anti-American basis, or at least on a basis in which criticism of the United States becomes the organizing principle.”²¹⁰ In reality, things were not quite that simple. A strong Europe would be a Europe that could pursue policies that differed from those of the United States in perhaps fundamental ways. But as U.S. leaders saw it, there were limits beyond which the Europeans simply could not go. Even on economic issues, the Nixon administration expected the Europeans to take U.S. interests “fully into account.”²¹¹ The basic U.S. view from 1961 on was that the West European countries were dependent on the United States for their security and in such circumstances could not pursue totally independent foreign policies. If the Europeans wanted complete political independence, they would have to be militarily independent as well—that is, they would have to be prepared to defend themselves. But if they wanted U.S. protection, they could not oppose U.S. policy in any major way.²¹²

Does this mean, however, that the French were right in thinking that the U.S. goal in pressing for a “revitalized” alliance was to create a system in which the policies of the European governments would be subject to U.S. control? Again, things are not quite that simple. Kissinger and Nixon certainly wanted the main Western allies to work out what amounted to a common policy, but that does not in itself mean that they thought the U.S. government would essentially determine what the policy would be.²¹³ Kissinger

210. Kissinger-Pompidou Meeting, 18 May 1973, p. 7, in DNSA/KT00728; and Kissinger in Secretary's Staff Meeting, 26 December 1973, in DNSA/KT00973, p. 2.

211. See “U.S. Policy toward the European Community,” National Security Decision Memorandum 68, 3 July 1970, in Box H-208, National Security Council Institutional Files, NPL.

212. For U.S. views on this subject during the Kennedy period, see Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, pp. 303, 338–339, 376. Note also the U.S. reaction to Mitterrand's 1991 plan for a “European Confederation.” The U.S. government made clear that it would not accept “being used by the Europeans for security and held apart from other domains.” See Frédéric Bozo, *Mitterrand, the End of the Cold War, and German Unification* (New York: Berghahn, 2009), p. 356. (The quotation is a German paraphrase of U.S. views conveyed to the French government on 5 March 1991.) The Baker and Bush comments quoted in Mary Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 146, 175, point in the same general direction.

213. See [Henry Kissinger], “Proposed Outcome of the Meeting between Presidents Nixon and Pompidou in Iceland,” n.d. (late May 1973), in NSCF/949/Pompidou-Nixon Meeting May–June 1973/NPL. Kissinger's name does not appear on the document, but he is identified as its author in Jean-Bernard Raimond, Note for Pompidou, 29 May 1973, in 5AG2/1021/AN, which comments on (and follows in the file) a French translation of the document. Note also Nixon's comment in a meeting with Jobert a month later: “quels que soient les problèmes . . . nous devons parler d'une voix aussi forte que possible à partir d'une position concertée.” See Nixon-Jobert Meeting, 29 June 1973, in 5AG2/117/AN. According to Raimond, Nixon's remarks to Jobert “se situent au coeur de la proposition Kissinger (concertation avec rôle dirigeant pour les Etats-Unis, directoire, etc.)” Raimond Note for Pompidou, 4 July 1973, in File “Jobert-Kissinger,” 5AG2/1023/AN.

especially did not want to transform the European countries into U.S. satellites. Even in December 1973, he still admired France for being the only ally to “have the guts to stand up against us.” That independence was linked in his mind to the fact that the French were the only ones making a “serious defense effort.” It was for that reason that he wanted to “back them down without breaking them.”²¹⁴

But even putting aside considerations of that sort, it was simply a fact of life that the United States did not have anything like total control over what the European countries did. From the U.S. point of view, the future of West Germany in particular was up in the air. Thus, what the Europeans did really mattered. The French, especially, would play a key role, in large part because France could help determine how firmly the FRG was anchored in the West. That in turn meant that the European countries, especially France, would have a certain amount of bargaining power vis-à-vis the United States—that countries like France could not be treated as satellites, and that their views would carry weight in the Western system.

In institutional terms, the system the United States wanted to create would scarcely have marginalized the Europeans. The U.S. aim—and this had been a goal of Kissinger’s for quite some time—was to create a kind of “directoriate,” a system in which the four main Western countries would essentially work out policy for the alliance as a whole. The plan was to create a “very high-level working group”—composed of Kissinger and his French, West German, and British counterparts (Jobert, Egon Bahr, and probably Sir Burke Trend)—that would discuss all the major issues. This group, meeting secretly, would play a key role in the process by which a common policy would be worked out.²¹⁵ In that group the Europeans would thus outnumber the

214. Kissinger-Schlesinger Meeting, 5 December 1973, in DMPC:Nixon/FDPL.

215. Kissinger laid out his ideas in a meeting with top British officials on 19 April 1973. Trend to Heath, 24 April 1973, p. 2, in DNSA/KT00707; and Trend’s Notes of Kissinger’s Meeting with British Officials, 19 April 1973, p. 4, in DNSA/KT00707. See also the official record of this meeting in DBPO III, Vol. 4, p. 69, and Trend’s discussion of the plan in Trend to Heath, 2 May 1973, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, p. 81. On 22 May, Kissinger brought up the idea with Jobert, who seemed to like it. See DNSA/KT00736, p. 6. The plan was presented to the French in a more formal way in the “Proposed Outcome” document, cited in n. 213 supra. The “directoriate” concept was then discussed at some length at Reykjavik, and Nixon brought it up again in his meeting with Jobert in late June. Pompidou-Nixon Meeting, 31 May 1973, 10 A.M., pp. 7, 10, 12–13, in DNSA/KT00742; Nixon-Pompidou Meeting, 31 May 1973, 3 P.M., pp. 1–2, in DNSA/KT00743; Roussel, *Pompidou*, pp. 555, 558, 559, 562, 563; and Nixon-Jobert Meeting, 29 June 1973, p. 3, 5AG2/117/AN. See also Jobert’s comments about the plan in a meeting with German foreign minister Scheel, 1 March 1974, in AAPD 1974, pp. 257–258. On Kissinger’s early support for an arrangement of this sort, see Jeremi Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 171; and Kissinger, *Troubled Partnership*, p. 246. The idea of a “directoriate” was by no means new. The proposal de Gaulle put forth in his well-known September 1958 memorandum is the most famous example, but ideas of this sort had surfaced at various points in the 1950s and 1960s. See Schoenborn, *Mésentente approuvoisée*, pp. 32, 34, 244–245, 357; and Trachtenberg, *Constructed Peace*, pp. 167, 242–244.

American three to one; that fact alone meant that their views would carry a certain weight.²¹⁶

The basic idea behind the plan for a “directorate”—that the allies should try to work out a common policy—was by no means absurd. It is natural that allies should try to work together if they can; indeed, no ally can act as though the alliance does not exist and still expect the alliance to be politically meaningful. An alliance, if it has any substance, is bound, to some degree, to constrain the policies of its members. The real issue in the early 1970s was whether, in the U.S. view, the Europeans were essentially expected to rubber-stamp policies that had been decided upon in Washington, or whether, as Kissinger and Nixon insisted, the common policy would be hammered out in serious discussions among the four main allies.

Was it reasonable to think that discussions of this sort could lead to a policy that all the allies could support? The fundamentals were such that an accommodation was not out of the question. Even on the Middle East, the gap between Europe and the United States was by no means unbridgeable. At the end of 1973, Kissinger was willing to admit that the policy the U.S. government had pursued in this area had been a mistake, and he seemed to think that a new policy, much more in line with European thinking, was now appropriate.²¹⁷

To be sure, the U.S. administration had its grievances. The French, and indeed the Europeans in general, Kissinger often said, wanted to have it both ways.²¹⁸ They wanted the United States to pursue a *détente* policy, but were quick to complain about an emerging “condominium” when U.S.-Soviet relations improved. They complained about the agreements that were signed with the USSR, even though they themselves had already signed their own “political cooperation” agreements with that country.²¹⁹ Each major ally wanted the

216. To understand the importance of the proposal, one need only compare it with the main alternatives. On the one hand, the United States could have proposed that issues of interest be discussed in a body in which all the allies were represented. But in such a large group, no meaningful give-and-take would have been possible. As Sir Burke Trend, a top British official, pointed out at the time, “it would be difficult to get down to real business or drafting in such a forum.” Kissinger-Douglas-Home Meeting, 10 May 1973, p. 4, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, p. 89. On the other hand, the U.S. government could have proposed that the issues be discussed with the allies on a purely bilateral basis, but in that case the United States could have been accused of pursuing a “divide and rule” policy (to use a phrase that crops up in the British documents of the time).

217. See van Well to Frank, 10 December 1973, in AAPD 1973, p. 2012; and “Dr. Kissinger’s Visit to Europe—A Balance Sheet,” in Brimelow to Sykes, 18 January 1974, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, p. 513. See also Kissinger’s comments about the importance of working out a common policy in this area: Notes from 20 November 1973 Secretary’s Staff Meeting, 21 November 1973, pp. 18–21, in DNSA/KT00914.

218. See Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 94, 387, 963–964; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, pp. 135–136, 731; and Kissinger, “The Year of Europe,” pp. 593–594.

219. See Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 1273; and Kissinger Meeting with Rusk, Bundy, McCloy et

right to pursue an independent foreign policy, but when the United States exercised that same right, the Europeans were quick to complain about American “unilateralism.” France and Germany, Kissinger wrote, while eager to “circumscribe *our* freedom of action were not prepared to pay in the coin of a coordinated Western policy.”²²⁰ The assumption was that in trying to have it both ways, the Europeans were not acting responsibly. That was why it fell to the U.S. government to make “the ultimate decisions on the most critical issues.”²²¹

The Europeans, for their part, had more fundamental concerns. The basic problem from their point of view was that the Americans were retreating from the nuclear defense of Europe. If war broke out, U.S. leaders might be willing to use nuclear weapons in Europe proper, but they would not attack targets on Soviet territory, for fear of triggering an attack on the United States. Western Europe, especially West Germany, would in such circumstances become increasingly vulnerable to Soviet power and increasingly inclined to reach an accommodation with the USSR on Soviet terms.

These were all serious issues, but they were the sorts of issues that allies should be able to discuss. U.S. officials very much wanted to talk with their allies—or at least with the three major European powers—about this complex of issues and, above all, about the fundamental problem of the nuclear defense of Europe.²²² The whole point of the Year of Europe initiative, when stripped to its essentials, was to start a discussion of this sort. Did the

al., 28 November 1973, p. 10, in DNSA/KT00928. On the Franco-Soviet political cooperation agreement of 13 October 1970, see Marie-Pierre Rey, “Georges Pompidou, l’Union soviétique et l’Europe,” p. 155.

220. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 731; emphasis in original. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 387.

221. Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 964.

222. U.S. leaders repeatedly brought up the European defense issue in meetings with the allies. Kissinger, for example, told the NATO ambassadors in June 1973: “We sometimes say that conventional defense is within reach, and the Europeans say we must use nuclear weapons immediately. And we ask how to use them, but we have only agreed on using three. Does anyone believe that three will stop the Soviets? We have thousands of tactical nuclear weapons, but no rational plan for using them; perhaps the only thing saving us is Soviet uncertainty. We need a realistic discussion; if the decision is for much earlier use, then we need to decide how to do it.” See Kissinger Meeting with NATO Ambassadors, 30 June 1973, in DNSA/KT00767, p. 14. In referring to the plan for the use of three weapons, he was alluding to the “Provisional Political Guidelines for the Initial Defensive Tactical Use of Nuclear Weapons by NATO” (commonly called the “PPGs”), which had been developed by NATO’s Nuclear Planning Group in the late 1960s. On the PPGs, see, especially, J. Michael Legge, *Theater Nuclear Weapons and the NATO Strategy of Flexible Response* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1983), pp. 17–25. The basic point—the idea that NATO needed a “rational” defense concept and that a fundamental reappraisal of NATO strategy was in order—was one of the Nixon administration’s standard arguments. See, for example, Nixon-Heath Meeting, 2 February 1973, 4 P.M., pp. 2, 4, in DBPO III, Vol. 4, p. 20; and Kissinger Meeting with British Officials, 19 April 1973, pp. 8–9, in DNSA/KT00707. Kissinger continued to complain throughout the 1970s that NATO did not have a rational plan for the use of tactical nuclear weapons. See Trachtenberg, “The Structure of Great Power Politics, 1963–1975,” p. 28 n. 23.

torpedoing of that initiative serve anyone's interests? One well-placed observer, Kosciusko-Morizet, the French ambassador in Washington at the time and a man no would accuse of being excessively pro-American, thought, looking back twenty years later, that an important opportunity might well have been lost, a view I tend to share.²²³

An alliance, Kissinger wrote, is not just a legal contract. A real alliance, he believed, has to be based on something more fundamental. The Western alliance, in particular, had to be “sustained by the hearts as well as the minds of its members.”²²⁴ But emotions are what they are. A government's ability to shape the feelings of its own people is limited. So, in analyzing these issues, it makes more sense to focus on the intellectual side of the relationship. The members of an alliance are of course sovereign states, each with interests of its own. But they also have an interest in working together and perhaps even in developing common policies on key political issues. Working things out in that way is in large part an intellectual process. When countries have common interests, they can think those issues through together. In principle, they can try to work out a common course of action. It is perhaps a cause for regret that in 1973–1974 no real effort of this sort was made. But this does not mean that countries like France and the United States are simply incapable of working together.

Acknowledgments

This article was originally written for a conference on Georges Pompidou and the United States held in Paris in 2009. A much shorter version of the article will be included in a volume of conference papers published by the Association Georges Pompidou. A version of the full article, with links to most of the sources cited, is available at <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/trachtenberg/ffus/FrenchFactor.pdf>.

223. “Kosciusko-Morizet Comment,” p. 211. Even at the time, Kosciusko-Morizet thought that a positive response to Kissinger's “Year of Europe” speech was needed. He saw in the speech an “ouverture faite à l'Europe, et un esprit de concertation.” Raimond Note for Pompidou, 3 May 1973, in 5AG2/1021/AN. Kosciusko-Morizet's 23 April dispatch is also quoted in Gfeller, “Re-envisioning Europe,” p. 35.

224. Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 730.